

SERMONS

BY

THOMAS ARNOLD, D.D.



VOL. VI.

LONDON : PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

SERMONS

CHIEFLY ON

THE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE,

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL OF RUGBY SCHOOL,

1832—1840.

BY

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NEW EDITION,

REVISED BY HIS DAUGHTER

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LONDON :

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

1878.

PREFACE.

THE following Sermons have been collected from among those preached between the years 1832 and 1840; and have been chosen with a view to the illustration of Scripture, ‘either by explaining certain passages or portions of the sacred volume, or by stating some general rules of interpretation which may apply to the whole of it.’ The present volume will thus, in some measure, fulfil the intention expressed by my husband in the Introduction to the third volume of his Sermons.¹

Having been mostly preached in the chapel at Rugby, these Sermons must necessarily be of a practical character; but it will be found that they all bear more or less upon Interpretation—with the exception of three or four, which seemed to demand insertion from their peculiar subjects.

The order followed has been generally that of the texts; in one or two instances this has been for obvious reasons disregarded. Of the Sermon on ‘Death and Salvation,’ it may be necessary to explain, that it was preached on the occasion of the death of a pupil, whose last illness is the subject of several letters in July, September, and

¹ Christian Life and Doctrine.

October, 1835, in the first volume of the ‘Life and Correspondence.’

It is not, of course, possible, that sermons preached often at long intervals of time, and upon no preconceived plan, should present his views as a whole, or on every part of Scripture in due proportion. In some instances, also, this want of proportion has been accidentally increased. For instance, several Sermons on Prophecy, which I have reason to think he had selected for future publication, are missing : and the two printed Sermons on Prophecy,¹ which would otherwise have appeared here in their proper place, have been accidentally reprinted in the fourth edition of the first volume of Sermons.²

MARY ARNOLD.

Fox How,

January 14, 1845.

¹ These two sermons are now printed at the end of this volume.

² The few concluding words of this preface referred to some early sermons which have now been omitted.

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SERMON I.

THE CREATION.

GENESIS i. 31.

*And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was
very good.*

THE order of the Proper Lessons for the Sunday service throughout the year may be said to begin from this day. On this day we, as it were, begin the Bible, and the first lessons continue to be taken from the books of the Law and the Prophets successively, till we come again to the season of Advent; those for Advent and the Sundays after Epiphany being taken, for particular reasons, from the book of Isaiah alone. Now it is impossible that so small a portion of the Old Testament as can be read at the rate of two chapters a week, can give us anything like a full notion of its contents: indeed, there are several books from which none of the Sunday Lessons are ever taken at all. Still the selection takes many of the most important parts, and forms a skeleton, more or less perfect, of the substance of the whole Bible. In particular those great events recorded in the earlier part of Genesis, which concern directly the whole race of mankind, are read in the Proper Lessons with tolerable fulness. I mean the Creation, the Fall, and the Flood. It is true that there is much in the accounts of all these events, the real meaning

of which it is not easy to understand; and on which, therefore, it does not seem wise to dwell. But still the main facts are sufficiently clear, and contain matter which we can perceive most fit to hold the place which it does hold, as the beginning of the volume of God's revelations to man.

Now, for instance, if we take the account of the Creation in its details, as a piece of natural history, we not only involve ourselves in a number of questions full of difficulty, but we lose the proper and peculiar character of the Scripture as a revelation. This will be well shown by a contrast. There is preserved to us in a Greek writer, the lexicographer Suidas, a very remarkable extract from an old Etruscan author, giving an account of the creation of all things. It says that God designed His creation to last for twelve thousand years; that in the first thousand years He made the heaven and the earth; in the second thousand years He made the firmament; in the third thousand years He made the sea; in the fourth thousand the sun, moon, and stars; in the fifth thousand all living creatures except man; and in the sixth thousand He made man: it goes on to say that, as there had been six thousand years before man was created, so mankind was to last for another period of six thousand years; and thus the whole duration of God's works, animate and inanimate together, would make up the term of twelve thousand years.

Now the resemblances of this account to what we have in the first chapter of Genesis are manifest; and it would be a waste of time to point your attention to them. Nor is it of any consequence to speculate as to the causes of this resemblance, or to ask where the old Etruscan writer obtained the notions which he has recorded. What I wish to dwell on is the *difference* in the two accounts; for it is in this difference that we shall recognise the peculiar character of Scripture. First, let us observe what the Etrus-

can writer has got, which the Scripture has not; and then what he has not, which the Scripture has. It will be seen that he begins with a declaration respecting the times and the seasons, one of that sort which is most welcome to the curiosity of man; but which, as far as regards his practice, is rather mischievous than useful. 'God designed all created things to last for a term of twelve thousand years,' so he begins: and he ends with saying that the term of the existence of the human race was to be six thousand years. We know by the various attempts which some Christians have made to fix the time of the end from the prophecies, how natural it is to be curious about this point. And we know also by Christ's express words that it is a point not to be revealed to any created being: the hour of the death of the whole world is to be kept in the same uncertainty as that of the death of every one of us. And accordingly the Scripture account of the Creation gives us no information as to the time that the world was to last; it makes no revelation to gratify curiosity; it tells us what God has done, so far as it concerns our practice, and no further; and in like manner as to what He will do. 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' This is a true Scripture revelation; for the foundation of all our duties, of all right notions of ourselves, and of the world in which we are living, is laid in the knowledge of this fact, that it is God who made us and not we ourselves; that we have nothing which we have not received from Him, and that for His pleasure we are and were created.

Now let us see, on the other hand, what the Etruscan writer has not, which the Scripture has. The Creation, as he relates it, is a mere curious fact, and nothing more; the pretended correspondence of the numbers, that as there were six thousand years before man was made, so there would be six thousand years after he was made, is

just a thing to strike the imagination, and to excite wonder. But we find not a word as to any thing moral,—nothing that has to do with sin or with duty. But what says the Scripture? Immediately after the mention of the creation of all things, it goes on to give the relation in which man stands to his fellow-creatures and to God; the relation I mean as a matter of practice: that he has dominion over the earth and over all living creatures in it, given to him by the Lord and Maker of him and of them. ‘God blessed man and woman, and said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.’ We do not find this mentioned in other accounts of the Creation; yet this it is above all other things which it concerns us morally to know. It is a matter of experience that we are more powerful than all other creatures, by means of our reason; it is almost a matter of necessity that we avail ourselves of this power: but neither power nor necessity are satisfactory grounds on which to exercise dominion; they are not satisfactory to a thinking mind, because neither the one nor the other will supply the notion of right. In fact, I know of no subject more startling, when we begin to think of it, than the condition of the lower animals with regard to man. And even now it is full of darkness, it is impossible so to explain it as to leave it free from great difficulties, speaking intellectually. But all that we want practically, for the satisfaction, not of our understanding, but of our conscience, that these few words of God’s revelation have given us. ‘God said unto man, Have dominion over all living creatures.’ This makes our dominion no longer a mere matter of power or of circumstance, but of right: the difficulties of the question we may leave contentedly with God, knowing thus much, which is sufficient

for our purposes,—that the relation in which we find ourselves has God's sanction, and that in making His living creatures minister in such numberless ways to our use and comfort, our so doing is not tyranny, nor in any way sin ; inasmuch as we may do it in the full faith that it is according to God's pleasure.

Yet again, one other thing the Scripture tells us of the creatures, man included, to whom the work of creation had given being ; it is told in a very few words, yet how much is contained in it ;—‘ God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good.’ This again is a matter of proper revelation ; experience could tell us nothing of it. I said once before, that it was not original sin that was properly a revelation of Scripture, but rather original righteousness. We know, from what we see every day, that we, the individuals of the human race, are born sinners ; but we could not have known without revelation that the human race itself was born righteous. Its present state is not its nature, but its corruption : at its beginning some better thing was prepared for it. The evil which we see and feel in us and about us is man's work and not God's : it is, if I may so speak, the exception to God's creation, and not the rule. And how greatly does the knowledge of this fact minister to our moral good. How greatly does it teach us, with respect to this nature of ours, and this world in which we live, to think humbly, and to hope highly. To think humbly,—for we and all around us are a work of God spoiled and marred :—at first all was good ; when it came first out of His hands, it partook of His own perfection ; it was ruined afterwards by its own fault, not by His original design. What then if we should be the only part of His creation which has so fallen ; if those other worlds, which even our bodily senses can perceive, should deserve the title of ‘ good ’ still. Had our present condition been our original one, it might have

been that of all God's creation; it might have been thought to have been beyond His power or His will to make any thing wholly good. But even we, of whom we know so much evil, proceeded from His hands pure. We must not think then that we are a specimen of God's works; it is an enemy who hath done this: and we alone, it may be of all His creatures, have been thus torn from our Father's care, and from the freedom of our birthright, to lead a life of sin and of bondage.

Again, the same revelation of our original righteousness encourages us to hope highly. We see a state of things which justifies the melancholy views which so many have taken of man's nature and destiny. Pain and guilt, suffering and death, teach us too plainly that our actual condition is not one of blessing. And our experience gives us no prospect of any thing better: what happens to one of us in these matters, happens to all. And it has been asked why we should expect any thing better; why our present condition, with so much of enjoyment as is even now intermingled with it, should not be all that God designed for us. It might have been so indeed, for all that we could know of ourselves; but God has told us that it *was not*. He made us good, and He bestowed on us His blessing. We are fallen,—grievously fallen; but because it is a fall, because it is not natural to us to be as we are, therefore we may hope to be recovered from it. We may yet hope to be what God designed us to be.

Thus in the very record of our creation there is contained a lesson best fitted to our actual condition, a lesson of humility and of hope. But most certainly the hope would have been vague and uncertain, were it not for that positive warrant for it which God has given us in His Son Jesus Christ. To Him were repeated those words which had been uttered over the first man; to Him God said again for the first time since Adam's fall, 'That in man

He was well pleased.' And as He was a man such as man was first created,—good in the eyes of God, and fit for blessing; so God showed in Him what would have been man's portion from the beginning had he never fallen. For death had no dominion over Him: but having died for our sakes, because He put himself in our place, He rose again to die no more, because life is the portion of God's children, whom He sees to be good, and in whom He can declare himself to be well pleased.

Now what I have here observed as characteristic of this first page of the Scripture, is characteristic of it all; and he who dwells upon its inspiration as thus manifested, cannot estimate it too highly. It is an inspiration which indeed stands alone, and which no arts of men have been able to counterfeit. It is marked by what it does not say, as well as by what it does say; by the absence of any thing to gratify mere curiosity, or excite wonder; by the presence of that very nourishment which our moral nature needs, whether for instruction or for encouragement, or for warning, or for comfort. It is shown by meeting our wants in a way which we should not have thought of, but which, when once put before us, we find to be the very thing that we need. In this way there are some passages in the Old and New Testament sufficient of themselves to show that they are not of man, but of God. Such is that passage on which I have already dwelt,—the revealing to us that God has given to man dominion over other creatures,—and such also is the passage to be found a few chapters later, conferring expressly the permission to use them for our food. How unlike are these marks of God's revelation from the pretended revelations of men. And there are marks which it will be instructive to trace from time to time in following the course of the weekly lessons. This will teach us on the one hand to have a clearer knowledge of, and value for, the real inspiration of the sacred

volume, and also will relieve us from any anxiety or alarm, if we find that to these things God's revelations have been limited, and that His word was intended to communicate as from Him no other knowledge but that which will serve to make us wise unto salvation.

RUGBY CHAPEL: *February 15, 1835.*
(Septuagesima Sunday.)

SERMON II.

THE FALL

GENESIS iii. 15.

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

THESE words are a part of the sentence passed after the Fall upon the three parties most concerned in it: the woman, the man, and the serpent. I have said before, that there is much in these early chapters of Genesis which we do not understand, and which it is any thing but wise to dwell on and argue from minutely, just as if we did understand them. But amidst passages of this sort there are others not only clear, but to be numbered with the most instructive of the whole Scripture, for the large and most profitable view which they afford of the condition of mankind. Of this kind are those verses of which the text is one; the judgment passed upon mankind and on their tempter. These verses offer much to call for our attention, and suggest two ways in particular of considering them; one which I may call the moral view of them, taking them as they show the most important points in our actual condition; the other relating especially to the verse which I have chosen for my text, and showing forth by this earliest example that general character of Scripture prophecy which runs through the whole Bible.

First, then, let us consider the whole passage from the

fourteenth verse to the nineteenth, as leading us to observe some most important points in the actual condition of mankind. Now it will be clear, I think, on a moment's consideration, that the points here dwelt on are precisely those which render it impossible for the human race, taken as a body, to enjoy upon earth either physical happiness or intellectual; in other words, to be either perfectly easy and comfortable in their outward condition, or perfectly able to gratify that desire of knowledge which the strong and cultivated understanding feels so earnestly. That is, in other words yet again, God has so ordered the course of nature in this world now become sinful, that mankind shall be unable to find happiness in those things in which alone their corrupted nature would seek it, the pleasures of the body or of the understanding. It cannot be doubted that the corruption of our nature consists in this very thing, that we are careless of God, and seek our happiness from His creatures, either from ourselves or others. But He has ordered things so, that this search can never generally succeed; if mankind will not seek their happiness from God, there is a law of their condition which declares that they shall not find it elsewhere.

Now the enjoyment of this happiness in worldly things is mainly hindered, as we can all see, by the necessity of labour and of death. The difficulty of providing for our bodily wants obliges us to labour; we can neither be fed nor clothed without exertion; without such a degree of exertion as exceeds the limits of natural and agreeable exercise. This necessity bearing alike upon both sexes, although in a different way,—imposing upon the one, labour and anxiety abroad, on the other, labour and anxiety at home in the care of the family, manifestly has a tendency not only to abridge what are commonly called the comforts and enjoyments of life, but also, by denying us leisure, interferes no less certainly with the gratification

of our understanding by the pursuit of knowledge. We see that the great bulk of mankind have no leisure to improve themselves to any high degree intellectually.

But again, when man was sentenced to death, it implied that his body and all his faculties should have a natural tendency to decay and wear out after a certain time. Adam may have lived many years after the Fall, yet it is no less true, that the work of death began in him from the very moment when the sentence was uttered that he should die. And so in us all, though we may live out our full term of four-score years, yet death is working in us, in some measure, from the very hour that we are born. It is true, that when we compare one part of our life with another, it may be said, as I observed not long since, that life is working in the young in comparison with the old; there is in youth undoubtedly so much of growth and vigour. Yet even in youth there are signs of death's working; the disorders which befall infancy and childhood, even the occasional pains, sickness, weaknesses, to which the healthiest body is liable, all show that this wonderful machine of our earthly frames is not designed to last for ever; that it has tendencies to decay and disorder which cannot even be delayed for four-score years without much self-restraint and care. Now this construction of our bodies necessarily limits our power of enjoyment, no less in mind than in body. Even had we leisure to follow after knowledge to our hearts' desire, yet the very imperfections of our bodily frames oblige us to moderate our pursuit of it, or else often cut us off in the midst of it. Thus the span of human wisdom is necessarily limited; for if we so redouble our efforts as to anticipate in middle life the full wisdom and knowledge of age, yet these very efforts are in themselves exhausting, and only bring on earlier the period of decay. I may also mention that most painful consciousness which must beset us all, that at that

period of life when we have begun to collect large stores of experience and knowledge, when our faculties are at the highest from full exercise, and we have at last gained large materials to enable them to advance yet further,—precisely at that time the course of decay begins, and the added experience of longer life is more than counter-balanced by the gradual weakening of the faculties; so that we actually live to see our grasp upon truth become less and less firm, and our distance from perfect intellectual happiness become actually every year greater and greater.

So surely does that imperfect and mixed state of the outward world, which obliges us to labour, and that doom of death upon ourselves which is all our life long making preparations for its full execution, render it actually impossible for mankind as a body to find happiness in God's creatures, if they will not seek it in Him. These are things which it does not appear that any power or art of man can remove; the very increase of the numbers of mankind being in itself a constant provision to keep up the necessity of labour. And thus considered, as every day and every hour show us how really the sentence recorded in Genesis is actually pressing upon us all, so we shall understand how exactly calculated it is to effect its object; and we shall gain a true notion of those points in the constitution of things which some have cavilled at, while others have been so foolish as to deny their existence, if we view them, not as an arrangement of the Divine benevolence to produce happiness, but rather as an appointment of Divine justice purposely made to render the earthly happiness of sinful creatures a thing impossible.

I think it is most useful so to contemplate human life, although the view thus offered may be painful. Yet I know not that it need or ought to be painful: for although happiness in God's creatures, if viewed as apart from Him,

is truly impossible, yet happiness through Him is not impossible, not even in this world. It is very just to look upon life as a scene of trial, and not as a scene of enjoyment. But those very dark pictures of man's misery which are sometimes given are not just if applied to Christians: it is by no means true that life is to them unhappy under any circumstances whatever; while under circumstances, it is, and may well be exceedingly happy. For to Christians, whatever pain might be otherwise felt from labour and from decay, is constantly made up by hope; and the very circumstance that they have a more abiding city and a better treasure than any on earth, while it enables them to enjoy most thankfully those good things which God gives them here, takes away also that otherwise sickening disappointment with which we should else see them one by one vanish.

To this restoration of happiness, this undoing of the evil done by the tempter at the beginning, the words of the text are in their highest sense no doubt applicable. And they afford a good example, as I said, of that general character of Scripture prophecy which runs through the whole Bible, and in them it may be shown how those prophecies generally may also be understood and applied.

In their first and literal sense they are true and perfectly intelligible. They describe the relations existing between man and a class of inferior and noisome animals; whom he can destroy or keep under, but who are able in their turn to inflict some pain and injury on him. But in proportion as our notions of other parts of the story of the Fall become raised above the literal meaning, so also must they be raised with respect to this particular verse. The instant that we understand by the serpent that tempted the woman not a literal serpent, but a being morally evil, by whose arts the world has been ruined, then of course we

understand by the serpent between whose seed and the woman's seed there was to be perpetual enmity, that same being of moral evil with whom man's life throughout the history of the world would be perpetually struggling.

And when we read, that in this struggle, the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head while it should bruise his heel, it is no less clear, that here also the literal sense of the words head and heel is no longer to be thought of; but that in this great contest between man and evil, the triumph should be with man, although it should not be won but at the price of some loss and suffering.

Now taking it in this sense, partially, and up to a certain point, the fulfilments of it have been many. All those good men of whom the Scripture speaks, from righteous Abel downwards,—all who by God's grace lived in God's faith and fear, all found that in their struggle with evil they were conquerors; that it was good for them, and not bad, that they had ever been born. And all found also that, if saved, they were saved as by fire; their experience could enough tell them that evil was not without power to do them hurt.

Yet it is no less manifest that none of these cases came up to the full extent of the comfort required. At the Fall, evil had triumphed over the whole race of mankind; the state of things had become evil, which had before been good. If evil that had done this were to be crushed and destroyed, it must be by the restoration of all things; the human race must be recovered, which in its first struggle had been lost. And this could only be by a far greater and more perfect victory over evil than ever man had won; by such a triumph over labour and over death as should indeed show that the latter end of the human race should be better than its beginning.

Such a triumph was achieved by Jesus Christ, the proof of it being His resurrection. For thus it was shown

manifestly that death had been overcome; that evil had been vanquished in all its parts, outward and inward; that man was again restored to his original righteousness, and that being in the person of Christ no longer lost to God, but one with God, suffering and death could have no dominion over him, but that his portion was the fulness of joy at God's right hand for ever.

In this same manner it is, that so many passages of the Old Testament are applied to Christ in the New Testament, which, taken in their original place, seem to refer to a subject much less exalted. And the reason of the application of them to Christ is this: that whereas all prophecy is addressed to the hopes of the good, and to the fears of the evil, so the perfect fulfilment of it, that is, the perfect satisfying of these hopes, and the perfect realizing those fears, is to be found only in the perfect triumph of good, and the perfect destruction of evil; of both which we have the pledge in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and in His exaltation to the right hand of God, thence to come at the end of the world to judge the quick and the dead.

So that if we would fully satisfy the highest sense of all prophecy, if we would give it its entire fulfilment, we must seek for it necessarily in Him in whom all the promises of God, as St. Paul says, are found to be true; who being alone perfectly righteous, has alone shown to us, by His resurrection from the dead, that good shall perfectly triumph, and the restoration of the seed of the woman shall be complete.

This of course might furnish us with matter to engage not minutes only, but hours and days. I can but notice now, in conclusion, how it illustrates the great stress always laid by the Apostles upon the fact of Christ's resurrection. That fact was the real fulfilment of all prophecy, the great assurance of all hope; the great proof that evil

should not triumph, that the serpent's head should be bruised indeed.

Other events,—lesser mercies, earthly deliverances,—are in part the subject of prophecy, and in part its fulfilment. But its language, the language of hope in God, naturally goes beyond these ; it assumes a tone of unmixed confidence, it speaks of such an over-measure of good as far surpasses man's virtue on the one hand, or his earthly prosperity on the other. And therefore, it seeks elsewhere its real fulfilment : it tarries not on those lower heights which would receive it on its first ascent from the valley, but ascends and aspires continually to the mountain of God, to rest only at His right hand, when it has found Him who is there for ever exalted, Jesus Christ, both God and man.

RUGBY CHAPEL : *February* 22, 1835.
(Sexagesima Sunday.)

SERMON III.

MOUNT SINAI AND MOUNT SION.

EXODUS iii. 12.

This shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee : When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

IN the chapter from which these words are taken, we have the first beginning of what may be called the earthly redemption of God's Israel, as in the accounts of our Lord's birth, in the first chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke, we have the beginning of the spiritual redemption of Israel. It is very desirable to bear in mind, wherever it is possible, in reading the Old Testament, the connection of what we there read with ourselves and our own condition, lest we should regard it merely as so much past history, and separate it too much from any direct interest of our own. Now, the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt was not merely a great deliverance for a particular people ; here, as in so many other instances, the Israelites were the ministers of good to us. For if we consider how they had lived in Egypt, and for how long a time,—that they must have generally lost all remembrance of their fathers, the patriarchs, and have greatly forgotten the God of their fathers,—we shall see how hardly the knowledge of God could have been preserved amongst men, had not the Israelites been separated from amongst the Egyptians, and settled by themselves in a land of their own. And

had it not been for the knowledge of God possessed by the Israelites, and spread through them and through their Scriptures amongst the adjoining nations, it does not appear how there could have been any soil prepared to receive the seed of fuller truth, when the Gospel itself was in its due season revealed to mankind.

This being considered, will give us a much deeper interest in that particular part of the Scripture history which will be read for the next two Sundays, as well as to-day. And in taking the several passages of the lesson for this morning, the words of the text seemed to me to contain much that was deserving of notice. For, first, the words may not be at first clear to every one, and so may require to be explained; and then, when we have explained them, they lead us to consider one of the most striking parts of God's dealings with the Israelites; and thence,—as His dealings with the Israelites in the old covenant have almost always some analogy or resemblance to His dealings with us under the new covenant,—they lead us also to consider a very striking part of the dispensation of the Gospel.

First, then, let us try to explain the words, 'This shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.' How was the mere fact, that Moses should bring the people to worship God on that mountain, to be a token to him that God had sent him? because, if he led them thither in obedience to God's command, it could not be properly a token to him that that command was from God, but rather a proof to the people that he believed it to be so. But in the words, 'ye shall serve God upon this mountain,' there is more meant than that the Israelites should come there to offer their sacrifices. The meaning is, that God would, as it were, meet them on that mountain; that when they wor-

shipped Him there, He would be found by them ; that His presence should be shown to them so manifestly, that Moses and all the people should know that He whom they worshipped, and He by whom they had been delivered out of Egypt, and who had called Moses from tending sheep to be the leader of His people, was indeed the Lord of Heaven and earth, the one eternal God.

Mount Sinai, then, was to afford the great sign of the divine mission of Moses ; there God would be revealed to him, and show that He was God indeed. Wherefore He came down with all the signs and seals of His presence, with His power, and His wisdom, and His goodness. He came with His power, with blackness and clouds, and thick darkness, with fire, and the sound of a trumpet, and with a mighty voice. Hear, and think upon the solemnity of that day on Mount Sinai, when God gave the signs of His power :—‘ Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.’ These were the signs of power ; and thus we find Moses appealing to them as such, when he asks the people, ‘ Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live ? ’

But there were also given the signs of God’s wisdom and goodness : there was given on that same Mount Sinai, that law of which St. Paul bore true witness, when he described it as holy, just, and good. There were given all those statutes and ordinances which met so many of the worst evils of society, evils which it has been found so hard to deal with,—statutes which, while they made allowance in some respects for the hardness of the people’s hearts, for their imperfect notions of right and wrong, yet

had a tendency gradually to raise those notions, and so to prepare them for the yet more perfect law that was to be revealed hereafter. So that Moses could appeal to the signs of God's wisdom and holiness shown on Mount Sinai, no less than to the signs of His power. 'What nation is there so great that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?'

By what was to happen on Mount Sinai a proof was to be given that Moses had been sent by God to deliver Israel. But this proof was not after the same manner to be given again to a future Redeemer. For the people had said, 'Let us not hear again the voice of the Lord our God, neither let us see this great fire any more, that we die not. And the Lord said, They have well spoken that which they have spoken.' Therefore He said unto Moses, 'I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.' The next redemption given, the next law delivered, were thus not to have exactly the same sign as that which had accompanied the redemption and the law ministered by Moses.

Yet, as God had said to Moses, 'This shall be a token unto thee: When thou hast brought the people out of Egypt, thou shalt serve God upon this mountain;' so was the worshipping of God on His holy mountain to be a token, no less, that Jesus Christ, the perfect Redeemer and Lawgiver, had come from God also. And so the Apostle, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, compares Mount Sion with Mount Sinai, even while he is contrasting them. For there, too, should be seen all the signs of God, His power, and His wisdom, and His love; only His power itself was to show itself in works of love and not of terror. His power was shown in the great company of the worshippers,—that out of every land men were turned unto

Him, and His word beginning at Jerusalem, had triumphed even to the ends of the earth. His power was shown in the person of Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant; for He was dead, and is alive for evermore; and having so overcome death, He hath opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Further, His power was shown also in the gifts of His Holy Spirit,—His signs and wonders, done by the Apostles, and by those on whom the Apostles laid their hands; His better and more enduring signs and wonders, done, not by the Apostles only, and by the men of one generation, but by thousands in a thousand generations,—the signs of the renewed heart and the converted will, the signs of peace, and hope, and joy.

And as there were the signs of God's power on Mount Sion as well as on Mount Sinai, though of a different kind, so also were there the signs of His wisdom and of His goodness, differing from those shown on Mount Sinai, not in kind, but in degree. There were the wisdom and the goodness of Christ's law of liberty, fitted for the highest perfection to which men could possibly ascend, and admitting of nothing wiser or better. These signs we have; these are the signs enjoyed by the Church of God in her worship on God's holy mountain,—a sure token that He, by whom she was redeemed and brought to this holy mountain, was her true prophet, her true deliverer; that her redemption from first to last was the work of God alone.

So, then, we are on God's holy mountain, and He is with us. The first Israel abode for a certain time before Mount Sinai; but then they went on their way through the wilderness. But we are worshipping, if it be not our own fault, on the mountain of God always. The signs of His presence are ever before us, that we may see and believe. But as Israel feared the thunder and the fire, so we despise the milder signs that are offered to us; we see,

and do not believe. It is so, and it is our sin and our shame that it is so. But is not our sin yet greater, if we not only despise the signs of God, but are actually engaged in obscuring or defacing them? if we not only do iniquity ourselves, but offend others; that is, cause others, through our fault, to fall the more readily?

I am not speaking now of what I have so often spoken of, the difficulties which we throw in the way of others,—I do not say deliberately, but at any rate wilfully,—when by laughing, or persuading, or by any other influence, we actually do turn our neighbour away from good to bad. I am not speaking of this, but of a fault common to us all, at every age and in all circumstances. We are too apt to lessen, to obscure, to deface for each other the signs of God's presence amongst us; we live with one another nominally in the bonds of God's holy Church, rather to hinder each other in our Christian course than to forward.

For manifestly do we hinder our brethren rather than help them, by every mark of unbelief and of evil that we show in our own hearts and lives; we so far deface the signs of God's presence, we lessen the assurance that we are on His holy mountain. Our faith is weak; who does not know and feel that it is so? God is not visible to us, nor can we see beyond the grave; and therefore there is a weakness of faith in each of us naturally, and through the effect of our corruption, which needs all the strength which it can derive from others; which is chilled yet more, when it can perceive but too plainly in them the marks of the same weakness.

To meet this evil, this unbelief arising from our natural corruption, to give to each of us the help which we singly need, the Church of Christ was instituted. For if, as we are brethren, we rendered to each other a brotherly aid, how great would be the confidence which we should catch

from that visibly reflected in the hearts and lives of all around us; how real would God's presence be, how real His blessings and His promises, if all about us were living evidences to them, either in assured hope or in actual possession.

And if the whole Church with accordant utterance were to give out in action this most holy creed, this living confession of a true faith, where would unbelief be able yet to linger? What heart would be buried in such thick darkness as that such multiplied rays of God's Spirit should not disperse the gloom?

This were, indeed, a true creed, a holy unity; this would be to fulfil the purposes for which we were bound together in union. If we do not possess these, vain, and worse than vain, is any care after other creeds and another unity. All may speak the same words, but they will be words and no more: the faith will be in the tongue, and not in the heart; we shall not really help each other, but hinder.

RUGBY CHAPEL: *March 20, 1836.*

(Fifth Sunday in Lent.)

SERMON IV

WARS OF THE ISRAELITES.

DEUTERONOMY vii. 2-4.

Thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them: neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods.

THERE is, perhaps, no point on which the weakness of human nature is more clearly shown, than in the difficulty of treading the right path between persecution on the one hand, and indifference to evil on the other. For although we are, it may be, disposed according to our several tempers more to one of these faults than to the other; yet I fear it is true also that none of us are free from the danger of falling into them both. Not certainly that this can happen at the same time, and towards the same persons; but if we have to-day been too violent against the persons of evil men whom we do not like, this is no security against our being to-morrow much too forbearing towards the practices of evil men whom we do like; because we are all apt to respect persons in our judgment and in our feelings; sometimes to be too severe, and sometimes too indulgent, not according to justice, but according to our own likings and dislikings.

Nor is it respect of persons only which thus leads us

astray, but also our own particular sympathy with, or disgust at, particular faults and particular characters. Even in one whom we may like on the whole, there may be faults which we may visit too hardly, because they are exactly such as we feel no temptation to commit. And again, in one whom we dislike on the whole, there may for the same reason be faults which we tolerate too easily, because they are like our own.

There is yet a third cause, and that a very common one, which corrupts our judgment. We may sympathize with such and such faults generally, because we are ourselves inclined to them ; but if they happen to be committed against us, and we feel the bad effects of them, then we are apt to judge them in that particular case too harshly. Or again, we may rather dislike a fault in general, but when it is committed on our own side, and to advance our own interests, then in that particular case we are tempted to excuse it too readily.

There are these dangers besetting us on the right hand and on the left, as to our treatment of other men's faults. And if we read the Scriptures we shall find, as might be expected, very strong language against the error on either side. A great deal is said against violence, wrath, uncharitableness, harsh judgment of others, and attempting or pretending to work God's service by our own bad passions ; and a great deal is also said against tolerating sin, against defiling ourselves with evil doers, against preferring our earthly friendships to the will and service of God.

Of these latter commands, the words of the text, and other such passages relating to the conduct to be pursued by the Israelites towards the nations of Canaan, furnish us with most remarkable instances. We see how strong and positive the language is : 'Thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them ; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy to them : ' and the reason is given,

‘For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods.’ It is better that the wicked should be destroyed a hundred times over, yea, destroyed with everlasting destruction, than that they should tempt those who are as yet innocent to join their company. And if we are inclined to think that God dealt hardly with the people of Canaan in commanding them to be so utterly destroyed, let us but think what might have been our fate, and the fate of every other nation under heaven at this hour, had the sword of the Israelites done its work more sparingly. Even as it was, the small portions of the Canaanites who were left, and the nations around them, so tempted the Israelites by their idolatrous practices, that we read continually of the whole people of God turning away from His service. But had the heathen lived in the land in equal numbers, and still more, had they intermarried largely with the Israelites, how was it possible, humanly speaking, that any sparks of the light of God’s truth should have survived to the coming of Christ? Would not the Israelites have lost all their peculiar character, and if they had retained the name of Jehovah as of their national God, would they not have formed as unworthy notions of His attributes, and worshipped Him with a worship as abominable as that which the Moabites paid to Chemosh, or the Philistines to Dagon? So had Abraham been called from out his native country in vain; and Israel had in vain been brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and fed with the bread of heaven in the wilderness; the witness to God’s truth would have perished; the whole earth would have been sunk in darkness; and if Messiah had come, He would not have found one single ear prepared to listen to His doctrine, nor one single heart that longed in secret for the kingdom of God.

But this was not to be, and therefore the nations of Canaan were to be cut off utterly. The Israelites’ sword,

in its bloodiest executions, wrought a work of mercy for all the countries of the earth to the very end of the world. They seem of small importance to us now, those perpetual contests with the Canaanites, and the Midianites, and the Ammonites, and the Philistines, with which the Books of Joshua and Judges and Samuel are almost filled. We may half wonder that God should have interfered in such quarrels, or have changed the order of nature in order to give one of the nations of Palestine the victory over another. But in these contests, on the fate of one of these nations of Palestine, the happiness of the human race depended. The Israelites fought not for themselves only, but for us. Whatever were the faults of Jephthah or of Samson, never yet were any men engaged in a cause more important to the whole world's welfare. Their constant warfare kept Israel essentially distinct from the tribes around them; their own law became the dearer to them, because they found such unceasing enemies amongst those who hated it. The uncircumcised, who kept not the covenant of God, were for ever ranged in battle against those who did keep it. It might follow that the Israelites should thus be accounted the enemies of all mankind, it might be that they were tempted by their very distinctness to despise other nations; still they did God's work; still they preserved unhurt the seed of eternal life, and were the ministers of blessing to all other nations, even though they themselves failed to enjoy it.

But still, these commands, so forcible, so fearful,—to spare none—to destroy the wicked utterly—to show no mercy,—are these commands addressed to us now? or what is it which the Lord bids *us* do in these words addressed to His servant Moses? Certainly He does not bid us to shed blood, nor to destroy the wicked, nor to put on any hardness of heart which might shut out the charity of Christ's perfect law. We must not be cruel, we must

do nothing against the law of justice and humanity, even to remove the evil from out the land. And to do as the Israelites did would be to our feelings, though it was not to theirs, cruelty and injustice. But there is another part of the text which does apply to us now in the letter, thereby teaching us how to apply the whole to ourselves in the spirit. 'Be ye not unequally yoked together in marriage with unbelievers,' is the command of God through the Apostle Paul to Christians, no less than of God through Moses to the Israelites. 'For what concord,' he goes on to say, 'hath Christ with Belial? or what communion hath light with darkness?' It is, indeed, something shocking to enter into so near and dear a connection as marriage, with those who are not the servants of God. It is fearful to think of giving birth to children whose eternal life may be forfeited through the example and influence of him or of her through whom their earthly life was given.

But though this be the worst and most dreadful case, still it is not the only one. St. Paul does not only speak against marriage with the unbeliever; he speaks also no less strongly against holding friendly intercourse with those who call themselves Christ's, yet in their lives deny Him. 'I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one no not to eat; but put away from among yourselves that wicked person.' Here, again, it is true, that the altered state of things around us has hindered these words also from applying to us in the letter. The church having no power in our days to shut out unworthy members from its society, individuals cannot take such a power upon themselves; and therefore we do in the world very commonly keep company, as far as the common civilities of life go, with those whose lives we know to be unchristian. Yet here, too, the spirit of the command

applies to us, when we cannot fulfil it in the letter. We need not actually refuse to eat with those whose lives are evil; but woe to us if we do not shrink from any closer intimacy with them; if their society, when we must partake of it, be not painfully endured by us, rather than enjoyed. We may put away from among ourselves that wicked person; put him away, that is, from our confidence, put him away from our esteem, put him altogether away from our sympathy. We are on services wholly different; our masters are God and mammon; and we cannot be united closely with those to whom our dearest hopes are their worst fears, and to whom that resurrection which, to the true servant of Christ, will be his perfect consummation of bliss, will be but the first dawning of an eternity of shame and misery.

But whilst, above all other things, I would desire for every one of us an intense abhorrence of evil, yet we must not forget how fatally we may deceive ourselves by hating evil for our own sake, and not for God's. Here, indeed, we had need to examine ourselves carefully, lest we do but serve our own passions under the name of God. And if you ask what this means, I will explain it more clearly. I call it serving our own passions under the name of God, if we shrink from those kinds of evil only which we ourselves happen to dislike, while we do not shrink from all that God abhors. It is very easy for one who is of a generous nature to keep away from those who are mean and niggardly; for one of a high and active understanding to despise the grossness and lowness which accompany ignorance and folly. But if the generous person, while he avoids the company of the mean and low-spirited, has no such objection to the sensual or the extravagant; if the strong understanding, while it revolts from the low vices of ignorance, has no distaste for those who unite with great abilities and knowledge an indifference for the ser-

vice of God, then we are but pleasing ourselves in what we like, and in what we dislike; we are not trying to please God. But his is a true and sincere love of God who, passing by all else in a character, whether it be of good or of evil, merely asks whether there be contained in it the one thing needful. Infinite, indeed, are our differences of taste and of knowledge. Rudeness and coarseness may pain us, ignorance may disgust us; but let us strive to find out Christ's mark, and, wherever found, to love it; to think that as our neighbour has his imperfections so have we ours; that these may be as painful to him as his to us; but that both his and ours have been washed away in the sight of God in the same most precious blood, and that what God will not condemn in His judgment, we ought to forgive in ours.

It is indeed a grievous thing to know and to feel how many good men are divided from one another by trifling differences, not of opinion only, but of temper, of taste, and of manner. It is a fault which besets us all; one of the last, perhaps, which our nature, ripening into Christ's full resemblance, can cast away. But as our faith becomes stronger, as Christ becomes more and more to us our all in all, as eternity seems more real and more enduring, and as earth and earthly things dwindle into their proper proportions, then our eye fixes upon the one pearl of great price which is to be discerned in our neighbour's breast; and although it be not set off by the other parts of his dress, nay, though its lustre be somewhat obscured by their poverty,—still it is the seat of Christ's Spirit, the pledge that he who wears it shall be our companion for ever, that our ears shall drink in together, our voices eternally join in the same hymns of praise, our eyes and hearts and perfected spirits for ever repose in the incomprehensible communion of the same God and Saviour.

And not less grievous is it, that for the love of any

perishable thing we should be drawn closely to him who loves not Christ. Our tastes may be the same, our knowledge kindred, our faculties alike vigorous, our prevailing feelings towards earthly things may all beat in harmony. But all these things must be destroyed; and where is the pledge that we shall with equal joy awake to the call of His trump who shall bid the dead arise? Be that our only bond of friendship, the only communion which our souls shall thoroughly acknowledge. All else is but the slight acquaintance formed on a journey with one who is to part from us at the next town to meet us no more. Whoso loves Christ, may we love him to the death, in spite of unkindness, in spite of all differences of earthly tastes and opinions: for the hour will come when all these things shall pass away. Whoso loves not Christ, and Christ's Spirit, may our hearts shrink from him evermore, in spite of all sympathy in our pursuits of worldly things; for our paths are wide asunder as the most infinite distances. We are of the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and he is of the children of the wicked one.

„ RUGBY CHAPEL: *May* 5, 1833.

SERMON V.

SUFFERINGS OF THE ISRAELITES.

DEUTERONOMY xxviii. 67.

In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see.

THESE words are taken from the chapter which was read as the first lesson for the morning service on Wednesday last. It was not chosen on purpose, for there are no proper lessons for Ash Wednesday; but it is the regular lesson in the calendar for the seventh day of March; and as Ash Wednesday happened to fall on that day, so this chapter was read accordingly. Yet, had it been intentionally fixed upon, it could not have suited the service better. In particular, it well agrees with the Communion service, which warns us against falling under the wrath of God for our many and various sins. This chapter is, indeed, an awful commination: it threatens the Israelites with every conceivable evil, if they departed from serving the Lord their God; it leaves them absolutely without hope, unless they turned with all their hearts, and repented them of their disobedience.

It is impossible, I think, to read or to hear this chapter without being deeply struck by it. It speaks to the Israelites, before they were yet entered into the land of Canaan, to forewarn them lest they should be cast out

of it. Amidst all the signs and wonders which God had been showing in their behalf, they were taught to look for a time when neither miracle nor prophet would be vouchsafed to them, when God would be as closely hidden from them as His power was now manifestly revealed to do them good. As if, too, warning were far more required than encouragement, we find that the blessings promised for obedience bear a small proportion in point of length to the curses denounced against disobedience. So the Israelites entered Canaan, and took the lands of the heathen into possession, not without much to sober their pride, and to make them not high-minded, but fear. As when Solomon built his temple, and when Hezekiah showed all its treasures to the messengers of the king of Babylon, there was ever a warning voice mingling with the sounds of pride and self-congratulation, there was always something to check the fulness of the joy, that so it might be the safer.

The severe judgments spoken of in this chapter declare also another great law of God's providence, that 'to whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.' It was because the Israelites were God's redeemed people, because He had borne them on eagle's wings, and brought them to Himself; because He had made known to them His will, and promised them the possession of a goodly land, flowing with milk and honey,—it was for these very reasons that their punishment was to be so severe, if they at last abused all the mercies which had been shown to them. For theirs was to be no sudden destruction, to come upon them and sweep them away for ever; it was a long and lingering misery, to endure for many generations; like the bush which burned, but was not consumed. We know that Ammon, and Amalek, and Moab, that Assyria and Babylon, have long since utterly perished; the three former, indeed, so

long ago that profane history does not notice them; its beginnings are later than their end. But Israel still exists as a nation, however scattered and degraded: they have gone through for ages a long train of oppressions, visited on them merely because they were Jews. Nay, even yet the end is not: however much their condition is bettered, still, taking them the world through, they have even now much to bear; their hope is still deferred, and as far as their national prospects are concerned, the morning dawns on them with no comfort, the evening descends upon them and brings no rest.

This is one remarkable part in their history; and there is another which I think deserves notice. It is declared in this twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, that amongst the other evils which the Israelites should suffer for disobedience, they should endure so long a siege from their enemies, as to suffer the worst extremities of famine. ‘The tender and delicate woman among you that would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil towards the husband of her bosom, and towards her son, and towards her daughter.’ Now it is remarkable that this has, in fact, befallen them twice over. Of the siege of Jerusalem, by Nebuchadnezzar, we have indeed no particulars given; it is only said, in general terms, that after the city had been besieged for eighteen months the famine prevailed in it, and there was no bread for the people of the land; so that the king and all the fighting men endeavoured to escape out of the town, as the only resource left them. But of the second siege, by Titus and the Romans, we have the full particulars from Josephus, a Jew, who lived at the time, and had the best authority for the facts which he relates. And he mentions it as a horror unheard of amongst Greeks or barbarians, that a mother, named Mary, the daughter of Eleazar, from the country beyond Jordan, was known to

have killed her own child for her food, and to have publicly confessed what she had done. Now we know that the horrors of war have been felt by many nations ; but such an extremity of suffering occurring twice in the course of its history, and under circumstances so similar as in the two sieges of Jerusalem, there is hardly another nation, so far as I am aware, that has experienced.

Indeed the history of the calamities of the last siege of Jerusalem, as they are given by Josephus, are well worthy of our attentive consideration. Not that in general there is any good to be gained by reading stories of horror ; but in this case the value of the lesson overpays its painfulness ; it is a full comment on our Lord's words, when He turned to the women who were weeping as He was bearing His cross to Mount Calvary, and bade them 'not to weep for him, but to weep for themselves and for their children.' It explains why they should indeed, in those days, say to the mountains, 'fall on us,' and to the hills, 'cover us ;' how, unless those days had been shortened, there could have been indeed no flesh saved. Eleven hundred thousand Jews perished in the course of the siege, by the sword, by pestilence, or by famine. I do not believe that the history of the world contains any record of such a destruction, within so short a time, and within the walls of a single city. A number of persons equal to the population of London, in the largest sense of the term, and taking in many of the most populous parishes of the neighbourhood, was crowded together within limits far narrower than those of London, and all perished. In fact, the population crowded together in Jerusalem was much greater than this ; for besides these eleven hundred thousand, ninety-seven thousand were taken prisoners ; and these were reserved, not for the light sufferings commonly undergone by prisoners of war in our days, but for

the horrors of the slave-market, and for a life of perpetual bondage.

I said that this dreadful story was well worth our studying; and it is so for this reason. These miseries, greater than any which history mentions, fell upon God's Church, upon His chosen people, His own redeemed, the people with whom He was in covenant, to whom He had revealed His name, while all the rest of the world lay in darkness. It was not upon Amalek, nor upon Babylon, that this extremity of judgment fell, but upon Jerusalem. And what is Amalek now, what is Babylon, and above all, what is Jerusalem? Whatever be the answer given to the two first questions, there can be no doubt as to the last. 'We are the circumcision,' says St. Paul, when writing to the Greek Christians of Philippi; that is, we Christians, and we alone, are now the true Israel of Scripture, the Israel of God, the seed of Abraham. It is even so, and as we have succeeded to the privileges of Israel, we should do well also to remember the fate of Israel.

But I am not speaking of ourselves as a nation; it is not as Englishmen, but as Christians, that we are the Israel of God; and it is not as Englishmen, that is, as citizens of an earthly country, but as Christians, citizens of a kingdom not of this world, a country incorruptible and eternal, that it concerns us to dread the judgments of Israel. God has other and far worse ministers of vengeance than the sword, or the famine, or the pestilence. These can but kill the body, and Christ has especially charged us not to fear those evils which can do us no greater harm than this. But we each of us individually, not in the persons of our children, not as the mere abstract idea which we call a nation,—we all of us here assembled, in our bodies and our own souls, have to fear an undying judgment. To us, each of us, belongs in the strictest

sense the warning of the text. For us, each of us,—if we do fail of the grace of God, if Christ has died for us in vain, if, being called by His name, we are not walking in His spirit,—there is reserved a misery of which indeed the words of the text are no more than a feeble picture. There is a state, in which they who are condemned to it, shall for ever say in the morning, ‘Would God it were even! and at even, Would God it were morning! for the fear of their heart wherewith they shall fear, and the sight of their eyes which they shall see.’ There is a state in which the tender and delicate woman shall hate those whom once she most loved; in which they who lived together here in a friendship wherein God was no party, will have their eyes evil against one another for ever. For when selfishness has wrought its perfect work, and the soul is utterly lost, their love is perished for ever; and the intercourse between such persons can be only one of mutual reproaches, and suspicion, and hatred. An eternal restlessness, and eternal evil passions, mark the everlasting portion of the enemies of God; just as an eternal rest, and a never-ending life of love and peace, are reserved for those who remain to the end His true children. It is true that we see not this state of misery, and may therefore, if we choose, disbelieve it. And so did the Israelites disbelieve their threatened misery; they said that the pestilence should not come unto them, neither should they see sword nor famine; and in refusing to believe that so great a misery as did actually overtake them should ever be their portion, they had, no less than we, the excuse that experience had never hitherto recorded a fate so dreadful. But what no former experience had ever witnessed, did come to pass in that day of God’s earthly vengeance; and no less shall all former experience, and even all our conceptions of evil, be outdone in the great day of God’s eternal vengeance. That earthly visitation on Jerusalem

was well called the ‘coming of the Lord.’ It was His earthly judgment for the final breach of His earthly covenant. Jerusalem after the flesh had had her privileges and her day of trial, and her time being come to its end, she underwent her final sentence. And we, too, citizens of the spiritual Jerusalem, we have our privileges, we have our day of trial, we too have our covenant; not with earthly blessings promised, and no more than an earthly forfeiture incurred, but with a higher stake on both sides,—an everlasting crown, or everlasting misery. For this second covenant the judgment is coming,—when, we know not; but this we know, that to each one of us the day of trial will be over soon, and then we shall be kept to wait for the judgment, with no further power to alter it. The judgment is coming not less surely than that whose fulfilment is before our eyes, but infinitely more important when it does come.

RUGBY CHAPEL : *March* 11, 1832.

SERMON VI.

BALAAM.

NUMBERS xxii. 20-22.

And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them: but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do. And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab. And God's anger was kindled because he went.

SUCH is described to have been the way in which God dealt with the prophet Balaam, and the following words from the fourteenth chapter of Ezekiel will show that it is the way in which He will deal with all men.

‘Then came certain of the elders of Israel before me, and sat before me. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them? Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God: Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the Lord will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols.’

The same thing is confirmed in the New Testament,

in these words of the Apostle Paul, taken out of the second chapter of his second epistle to the Thessalonians: ‘God shall send them,’ that is, those who perish, ‘strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be condemned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.’

All these passages of Scripture agree in declaring, that if we pray to God with a dishonest heart, He will not enlighten our consciences at all, nor show us what we ought to do; but rather will cause us to take wrong for right, and right for wrong, till we become utterly blinded and darkened, and are sunk without hope in evil. I have read three passages out of the Bible to this effect, but I might have read many more, for the same doctrine is repeated over and over again in a great many places, and in a great variety of ways, as if it were of the greatest consequence to us to remember it, and to act upon it. It was not put into the Bible merely to frighten us, or to try our submission by teaching what would give offence to many; much less was it put in to drive any to despair. It was written, as everything else was which we find in the Scripture, for our good: that we might hear indeed and fear, and do no more presumptuously. I do not say, indeed, that everybody can derive good from it; there may be some who are living witnesses of its truth, on whom the strong delusion is working, whom God may have answered already according to their idols, and whose sin may be the sin unto death, because they may be so lost in evil, that they can find no place for repentance. But such is not the case with men in general; and therefore the bulk of a common congregation, more especially of such a congregation as this, may be well called upon to profit by these assurances of God, that He will blind the eyes, and harden the hearts of those who do not come to Him in sincerity.

Balaam the prophet presents to us a character which is in several points very remarkable. In the first place, he had the gifts of the Holy Spirit without the graces ; he was favoured with the knowledge of God's will, and with the power of foretelling future events, while his heart was far from God, and while in his dealings he showed himself the servant of sin. What is said of Balaam, may be and often has been true of others ; we have only to put in the place of the gift of prophecy any one of what we call God's natural gifts, or any thing that is merely a power, and we see the same thing frequently. Power, whether natural or acquired, whether of mind or of outward condition, is no warrant for our finding goodness united with it. Yet it is still power, and oftentimes it does God's work, and ministers greatly to the good of others, although it is not blessed to the eternal salvation of him who possesses it. There is, indeed, a kind and a degree of wickedness which absolutely impairs the power ; the worst of men are not and cannot be the wisest. And so, on the other hand, there is a degree of goodness which actually in some respects confers power ; which enables an understanding not naturally strong to arrive at truth in matters of the greatest moment. But it is a mistake to suppose, either that those whose notions are the truest on points even of Christian truth should be men of the holiest lives, or that men of the holiest lives should see the truth most clearly on all points connected with Christianity. God gives His gifts or powers to men who sometimes possess but a small portion of the graces of His spirit ; His grace is often to be seen in a very high measure where His gifts have been bestowed scantily.

We understand this more easily with regard to the mere powers of the understanding ; we can well conceive that he who understood all mysteries and all knowledge, might yet be without charity. But the Apostle carries it

farther, and supposes that a man might give all his goods to the poor, and yet be without charity. In other words, a man may lead a very useful life, and yet not be an heir of Christ's salvation. The powers of a man's understanding may be combined with so much activity, he may be able to do such various good, and feel such pleasure in the doing of it, as to be really of the greatest service to his fellow-creatures. And yet there may be wanting in him that one principle which alone is Christian virtue or holiness, the desire to do Christ's will. Without this, moral usefulness is like intellectual power; both may minister largely to the good of others; both will perish in the using, and leave us with nothing that bespeaks our fitness for life eternal. There is a story told of one of the ablest and most learned writers who have lived since the Reformation, of a man who wrote a book in defence of Christianity, who studied the Scriptures deeply, and wrote long and mostly very good notes upon every part of them,—it is told, I say, of this very man, that when he was on his death-bed, he exclaimed in bitter regret, 'Alas! I have wasted my life in taking a great deal of trouble to do what is a mere nothing.' He calls his books, which he had written about the Bible, by no better name than a mere nothing. And why? Because he thought, that while he was writing or reading them, he was not labouring heartily for the glory of God, but for his own; because he thought that he had not been careful enough to govern his own heart while he was employed about them; that he had not, like St. Paul, laboured to bring his body into subjection, lest that by any means when he had preached to others, he should himself be a castaway.

At the present day, indeed, we are willing enough to allow that religious employments do not of necessity improve the heart; that a man may know much divinity, and may preach well and eloquently, and yet may not be

a true servant of Christ. Our mistake now is of a different kind; and we attach too high a value to what is called a useful life, to the being engaged in honest labour, whether of body or of mind, for the support of ourselves or of our families. I would, indeed, that we all led an useful life,—if I may so alter the words of the Apostle,—but rather that we led an holy one; for though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though we had the gift of prophecy like Balaam, or though we gave all our goods to feed the poor, and marked every day of our lives with some useful action, yet all this would profit us nothing, unless we had charity or love, the love of God first, and of man for Christ's sake. In Balaam's time, to be a prophet was accounted a certain sign of God's favour; and this opinion the Scripture takes pains to contradict, by showing us one who was a prophet, and whose life, notwithstanding, was disobedient to God, while his death was with the wicked. In our time, to be useful in our generation, and to be worthy members of society, are the things which most draw the regard of the people; and men should be reminded, therefore, that these are not certainly the signs of a regenerate man, unless they are built upon those Christian principles which are given and strengthened in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

Balaam, it seems, was living in his own country when he received a message from Balak, the king of Moab, requesting him to come to him and curse the children of Israel. Knowing that Balaam was a prophet, he could not tell how great was his power, but he supposed that his blessings and his curses would be confirmed by God; and that therefore, if he could gain him over to his side, he would be a very useful friend to him against the Israelites. He sent, therefore, some of the elders of Moab to Balaam, with the rewards of divination in their hand: in other words, he tried to bribe Balaam to say what he wanted; he

wished to bribe him by money to speak in the name of God. Now we are told that when Naaman, the Syrian, applied to the prophet Elisha,—not to curse any one in the name of the Lord, but merely to cure him of his leprosy, and when he had been healed, and wished to offer some present in return for the great service he had received, that Elisha would take nothing of him at all: he did not like to make a gain of those wonderful gifts which God had given him for His own glory and the good of man. But Balaam had no such scruples; he was willing to sell his gift of prophecy to any one that would buy it; he did not ask whether it was according to the will of God that he should curse Israel or no, but whether he should get any thing by it or no. Being of such a temper, he was not likely to consider very carefully how he might most please God, but was anxious to go with the men whom Balak had sent; when God told him that he should not go with them, nor curse the people, for they were blessed. This stopped him for a time; but Balak would not give up his purpose so easily. He sent other messengers of higher rank than before, promising him riches and honours in abundance, if he would but come to him. Balaam was again shaken; he wished greatly to gain the rewards that Balak had promised him, but he wished also to gain them without directly disobeying God. He hoped, it seems, to compound the matter: ‘If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God to do less or more.’ So much he yielded to his sense of duty; but then the love of gain came in, and tempted him to add, ‘Tarry ye here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say to me more.’ He wanted to ask counsel of God, in the way that we ask it sometimes of our worldly friends; we let them see plainly what advice we wish them to give us; and if they have first answered us honestly according to the truth, we try

to win from them some softening of their first opinion, something that may encourage us to do that which we are bent upon doing. But woe to him who deals thus deceitfully with God and with his conscience! Balaam gained exactly the very answer that he desired; God answered him according to his idols. He had said that he could not say anything beyond what God should tell him; but still he might perhaps be allowed to go with the men. And even so was the answer, 'If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.' God had spoken to him after his own heart, and Balaam was then fully satisfied; he did not ask the messengers to tarry yet another night, that he might know what the Lord would say to him more; he rose up in the morning and went with the princes of Moab.

We are expressly told that the persons to whom God sends strong delusion that they should believe a lie, are those who love not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness; whereas on the other hand our Lord assures us, that if any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or no. There is no doubt that the fact is so; that men of honest and fair minds have a very clear and sound judgment in all points of practice; whilst insincere men, endowed perhaps with much higher abilities by nature, become absolutely blinded and weak, when they come to determine questions of duty. Nor is it to be doubted that this law of God's providence is a just and wise one; inasmuch as it enables persons of inferior understanding to correct their deficiencies by the goodness of their hearts, while it deprives the wicked man of the benefit of those talents which he is abusing.

It is not without great reason that the Scripture so often recommends purity and singleness of heart, and threatens the double-minded. Few men, comparatively

speaking, will make up their minds to do evil at any rate ; and the number of those who wish to serve mammon only, is perhaps even smaller than of those who wish to serve God only. The great mass of mankind are undone by a vain endeavour to serve at once both God and mammon ; to their consciences they hold out the quieting language of Balaam, ‘ If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord to say less or more ; ’ while to their appetites they whisper at the same time, ‘ Tarry ye here awhile, that I may know what the Lord will say to me more.’ Then it is that the voice of the Lord, which they pretended to wait for, does indeed lead them to their ruin. For their conscience is God’s voice speaking within them ; and this, when dishonestly applied to, becomes a false guide, disguising the guilt of our conduct, or encouraging us to hope that the mercy of God will grant it forgiveness. It permits us to do things for which God’s anger will surely be kindled ; and although we should make answer that we did no more than we believed to be right, yet we shall be reminded that they who killed Christ’s servants, thought that they were doing God service ; but that this their blindness rather aggravated their sin than lessened it ; for it was a proof, as Christ Himself declares, that they had neither known His Father nor Him.

Man indeed may not be able to judge of the heart of man, nor can we pretend to say that our neighbour’s ignorance in many points is not an innocent ignorance, rather than a blindness sent by God as an earnest of his future condemnation. But, though we may not judge of one another, yet He who judges us all can see through every corner of our souls, can separate insincerity from truth, and can well perceive the weakness of those excuses which to human eyes might appear fair and reasonable. ‘ Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever thou goest, but suffer me

first to go and bury my father,' was a speech that could have conveyed no just suspicion to any man that heard it; but He to whom all hearts were open, knowing that the desire to follow Him was a mere pretence, cut down his hypocrisy, with calling on him to 'follow him, and let the dead bury their dead.'

Of all things, therefore, that we can impress upon the mind of a man when first entering into life, or at any after period, nothing is more important than the command of our Lord, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness;—'Purify your hearts, ye double minded,'—'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' How many doubts and difficulties would be saved, if we were to keep steadfastly before our eyes the one grand object of a Christian's life, 'to do all to the glory of God.' It is the suffering lower motives to come in too much, and too habitually, that leads us into evil; we act from custom, or convenience, or inclination, or to please our friends, or to gain a good character, till we almost forget what should be our first question to ourselves in everything that we do,—'How will God regard this conduct at the day of judgment?'

Nor is it true that such a question would condemn all cheerfulness and refreshment of the mind: it would sanction innocent relaxations, but it would teach us to weigh carefully the difference between what is innocent and what is sinful; and whilst it led us to cast away everything that might offend our Lord, it would enable us to enjoy with a free and confident pleasure whatever our Lord really permits to us. 'Whatsoever is not of faith is sin,' says the Apostle Paul; that is, 'whatsoever you cannot fully satisfy yourself to be right, that is wrong.' But there are many men, like Balaam of old, who rather reverse this rule, and who seem to think that whatever they cannot clearly prove to be wrong, that must be right. To

such it should be urged again and again, that God is not to be mocked, that He requires the free service of our hearts; and if we yield it so sullenly, that instead of shaping our desires to His law, we try to make His law correspond with our desires, He who sees the secrets of all hearts, will find us wanting in the great day of our account.

Above all, the example of Balaam should be a warning to all those persons who flatter themselves that they shall repent and turn to God when they are tired of the wages of unrighteousness. They do but deceive themselves by such a hope: for assuredly they never will repent. God will take away from them the little grace which they had; He will answer them according to their idols, and will encourage them to go on in their evil ways till they have filled up the measure of their wickedness. In the case of Balaam, warnings and mercies were alike useless; and we read that after his adventure with Balak he tried to put temptations to sin in the way of the children of Israel, and at last was killed amongst their enemies, the Midianites. So it will be with all those who endeavour like him to play a double part, instead of following their duty bravely and cheerfully. But if we keep ourselves ever in a state of mind like St. Paul's at his conversion, asking humbly, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' we may depend on being guided into all truth by the enlightening of God's Holy Spirit, and on having the path of our duty made clear before us, whilst we ourselves are strengthened amidst all temptation steadily to walk in it.

SERMON VII.

PHINEHAS.

NUMBERS XXV. 12, 13.

Behold, I give unto Phinehas my covenant of peace: and he shall have it and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.

THERE was a time, not many ages ago, when this passage, and the act of Phinehas to which it refers, were read with delight, and held up as models for imitation; when to be zealous even to slaying was accounted one of the virtues which should mark a servant of the Lord. After this temper had had its course, and had been displayed in various acts of cruelty, and of treachery and cruelty combined, there came, as usual, a reaction. Men saw what crimes had been committed under the name of religious zeal, and from an abuse of the Old Testament; and they began to think religious zeal a very dangerous thing, and the study of the Old Testament was suffered to go into neglect;—nothing was so much spoken of as the mildness, and forbearance, and tolerance of Christ's gospel. Then, as was natural, devotion became less fervent, and godly fear grew less. If men did not commit crimes from using the word of God amiss, so neither was there that growth in holiness which is the consequence of using it aright. Men felt that little had been forgiven them, and therefore they loved little. Again, therefore, there has come the

reaction; again the spirit of zeal is kindling; and again it seems likely that it will be a zeal not according to knowledge; that it will again, as heretofore, dishonour God by the follies and the crimes which it commits in His name.

Yet we must beware of another reaction to the opposite extreme. Abhorring and fleeing from that false and wicked zeal with which fanatics serve their idols while they profess to be serving God, we must yet earnestly strive not to be ourselves without true zeal. The story of Phinehas, the severer lessons of the Old Testament, are and ever will be needed;—the blessing which God pronounced upon him is no idle, no dead word; it still lives for all those who tread according to the spirit, and not according to the letter, in the steps of Phinehas. For we could not reasonably hold the Old Testament to be a part of God's revelations to men, if the lessons which it contains, and the characters which it holds up as examples in their relations to God, were not founded upon truth. God is for ever the same, and in our relations to God we, too, are the same as we ever have been. It is earth and our earthly relations which change; and as our outward practice has to do with these, so our actions must be often very different from those praised in the Old Testament; while the principle from which such action sprang, and which made them praiseworthy, is still good and most important for us, and still must bring forth its practical fruit, although that fruit will be no longer the same as it was in times past.

This applies particularly to religious zeal,—a feeling which is brought forward strongly in the Old Testament, as one most needful to be enforced, and most acceptable to God. And it is surely no less needed now, and no less acceptable: God being still, as in old times, hidden from our sight, and we being continually tempted to neglect

Him by our own evil nature, and by the very circumstances of our condition on earth,—it is quite as much required as ever that our zeal towards Him should be enkindled; it is quite as just that they who are zealous in His service should be regarded as the objects of His love.

If I might be allowed the comparison, many of the lessons of the Old Testament, and the story of Phinehas in particular, resemble, so far as we are concerned now, our Lord's parable of the unjust steward. There are some who have found that parable difficult, some who have misinterpreted it, and others who from horror of its misinterpretation would perhaps have been glad to neglect it altogether. Yet that parable contains a lesson which we greatly need; and though we may make it minister unto sin by misunderstanding it, yet we may not, therefore, pass it by as useless. There, as in the story of Phinehas, a principle most valuable is combined with a particular illustration of it which in the one case is always to be condemned, in the other is deserving of condemnation now. The forethought of the dishonest steward extorted something like respect from his master, even though shown in acts of dishonesty. The zeal of Phinehas is held up to our admiration, although the manner in which he showed it would be as sinful for us to imitate as the steward's dishonesty. But transplant, so to speak, this forethought and this zeal to the soil and climate of Christianity, and they lose immediately all the bad qualities, all the harshnesses which in their wild and imperfect state still clung to them. Christian forethought unites the innocence of the dove with the serpent's wisdom; Christian zeal can be no longer shown in acts of violence; its acts are as blameless and loving as its spirit is fervent and self-denying.

We need not, then, shrink from such parts of the Old Testament as the lesson of this evening's service. We may

shrink, indeed, from the form in which that lesson is conveyed, as we may from the details of the steward's dishonesty. Historically speaking, I quite allow that the event recorded in the twenty-fifth chapter of Numbers, is altogether extremely painful. But then, that which forms its substance, taken as history, is just its mere perishable form, when it is taken as Scripture. The wilderness of Arabia, the foreign manners and language, the licentiousness, the bloody punishment, all that is national and individual,—Midian, Israel, Phinehas the priest of the seed of Israel,—we may drop all these from our consideration. There still remains the true and eternal Scriptural lesson:—temptation assailing God's people, and God's people yielding to it; evil example spreading fearlessly; God's servant not only escaping the contagion himself, but coming forward boldly and unhesitatingly to stop it in others; and God's blessing pronounced upon him, because he had stayed his brethren from their sin. What is there here that does not apply to us? and how many are there amongst the great multitude of the lessons of Scripture which we can consider in our own particular case more needful?

The lesson turns particularly on this point, not merely on the keeping of ourselves pure from following evil, but on the making efforts to put it down in others. The one is innocence, but the other alone is deserving of the name of zeal. And innocence is a great deal more common than zeal. There are a great many persons who stand aloof from evil, whom none accuse of taking pleasure in it, nor yet of joining it; but neither do they take any active part against it. They say, it is not my business to meddle with the conduct of others; they must themselves look to that. This they say, because they have no zeal; because they are not interested either for God's glory or the salvation of their brethren; because they forget their vows in

baptism, when they were pledged not only to be Christ's faithful servants, but His soldiers also,—to fight manfully under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil; to do their best to spread their Master's kingdom, and not merely to offer Him the worship of their own hearts, caring little if He receives the worship of none besides. Zeal would look upon life differently; it would not rest contented with worshipping alone and in secret; it would desire to see the society in which it is placed worshipping God with one accord; that His name might be glorified, and that His salvation might be enjoyed by all.

And what is true in large societies of men, holds good also in smaller ones. The zeal which leads the missionary to go to the ends of the earth to convert a people sitting in darkness, may be exerted no less usefully and no less acceptably within the very camp of the people of God; within that immediate neighbourhood in which we are each placed to live. Zeal may work its proper work without crossing the ocean, without passing the boundaries of our own town or parish, without, as in our case, going beyond our own walls. Here is the camp of God's professed servants, in which temptation is busy, and many are yielding to it. Shall we then be content merely with not being of those who yield to it? Shall we stand aloof, passing by as it were on the other side, while our aid is loudly called for?

I am sure that some deceive themselves in this;—that the very spirit which they most need is that of zeal, that they are standing almost neutral in the great contest around them, content if they can be but themselves in safety. But this is not the part of Christians; we are members one of another; we make up together Christ's body; we are pledged to one another as well as to Him in our solemn communion. Surely there is utterly a fault in that person who thinks that the conduct of his brethren does not con-

cern him; that all that can be expected of him is to keep himself from evil; that to struggle against it belongs to others. It does certainly belong to others also, but not to others only. It is not my work only, nor your work only, but it is our work; not that we have all the same part of the work to do, or the same proportion of it; but we are all concerned in it; and all are neglecting their duty who take no hand in it. We cannot be in a state of salvation ourselves, if we are wholly without zeal for the salvation of others.

But now, supposing that you allow the truth of this in theory, yet, practically, you may ask, how does it apply to us? The path of duty here, must necessarily be difficult to find and to keep: how can we be zealous without violence and without folly? Would that there might be the zeal in the first place; for it would be, according to all human probability, far easier to direct it than to create it. It is a most true proverb, 'Where there is a will there is a way.' Nor can it be needful to say much to those among you whose regular duty and business it is to put down and prevent evil: where power and authority are given for a particular purpose, there surely cannot be so much difficulty in fulfilling it; there cannot be in this case anything like stepping out of your own line, even in the narrowest interpretation of the term. So far, then, the zeal may seem all that is wanted; the opportunity, the power, the knowledge how to act, may appear to follow naturally. But yet, no doubt, there are difficulties in this case, as in the case of others; it may not be always clear how you ought to act, nor easy to act, when the path is clear. And how is the path to be made clear or easy? It does not appear possible to give minute rules that shall always make it either the one or the other; but one thing may be said, that here, more than in most places, the standing aloof from evil, the never encouraging it by deed,

by word, or by laughter, would do more than it would do elsewhere towards actually discouraging it; because nowhere are fashion and numbers more apt to be followed than here. And again, zeal may always be shown judiciously, and very effectually, in giving countenance and support to all who show marks of goodness, more especially if they are exposed to any annoyance, either on this very account, or because they are wanting in some popular or amiable qualities. Kindness to such is real zeal; it is like the giving the cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, which shall in no wise lose its reward. For the rest, as I said before, no minute rules can be given to say how far you should go, and where you should not interfere; but remember that the desire to do something, must be right, and must be necessary; and that of all the dangers which can beset you, none, I suppose, is less to be dreaded, than that you should run into excesses from an over desire to forward the cause of Christ and of God.

Thus, although I feel entirely that no such guide could be furnished beforehand, as should make the path of duty always plain; yet some points may be made out, which may serve in no inconsiderable degree as landmarks. First, and above all, we should consider the strong approbation bestowed by God upon the conduct of Phinehas. We see zeal against sin displayed in the strongest possible manner—in a manner which indeed it would be great sin now to imitate,—but yet praised most highly. Observe, however, that it is zeal against sin, zeal against a clear breach of God's commandments, which is thus commended: it is not zeal against opinions, or in behalf of forms. But zeal against sin, and for goodness, is beyond all doubt so strongly enforced in its principle, that we cannot be living as God's people should live if we are wholly without it. This is the great point; and next, if we have the zeal, we have some rules also for its exercise.

First, that those who have authority given them, are certainly bound to act up to their authority in the discouragement of sin. In this there is no choice left to them; want of zeal in such cases is a clear neglect of duty, or rather, I should say, it is a neglect of our Christian duty, under circumstances where the duty is plain, and the neglect without excuse.

Secondly, the very least that Christian zeal can do in every one, is to take care not to encourage evil. We often do encourage it by laughing at it. Such laughter may often be accompanied in our own minds with something almost amounting to contempt: we would on no account do ourselves the thing which we laugh at in others. This is true; but yet the laughter does encourage; because, though laughter may be sometimes allied to contempt, it is never allied to disgust; no man laughs at that which pains him. To laugh at sin, then, shows certainly that it does not give us pain; that we do not regard it as Christians should do; that is, as the most sad, and serious, and shocking thing in the world; the last thing in the world to be laughed at.

Thirdly, Christian zeal must encourage every spark of real goodness and principle; must forgive for its sake many awkwardnesses, many weaknesses; for it is the one pearl of great price which may well ennoble a rough or a mean setting. Let us but see something of a desire to serve God in earnest, and is not the character where this desire exists ennobled far beyond every other? It may not have agreeableness, it may not have cleverness, it may not have vigour; it may and must have many faults clinging about it: for where is he who is free from fault? But it is God's mark, and the seed of life eternal; and they who are God's cannot but love it; and they who love it not, may therefore well fear that they are not and will not be God's.

SERMON VIII.

JAEL.

JUDGES V. 24.

Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

THE first question which it would be wise to ask concerning the two chapters which have been fixed on for the lessons from the Old Testament for this day's service, is this—'What is the benefit that we can or should gain from them?' This, indeed, is the question which we should ask ourselves with regard to every lesson read in the church, as a part of our public service; although in many cases it would be answered as soon almost and as easily as it could be asked. For instance, take the second lesson for this morning service (Mark ix.), or almost any other chapter of the Gospels, and it is manifest that as the life of Christ is our great example, and as in the words of Christ were contained all the treasures of wisdom for the guidance of man's heart and actions, so we can never doubt what good is to be gained from the record of His life, and the report of His words. Or again, in the second lessons for the evening service, which are taken from the Epistles of the Apostles to the different Christian churches,—when we hear them declaring the truths relating to Christ, or encouraging their Christian brethren to all holy and virtuous living, we need not doubt what good is to be

gained also from these. Or thirdly, when the lessons are taken from the writings of the Prophets, when we read the warnings delivered to the Jews when placed in circumstances so like our own; when we see good men holding fast by their faith towards God, and believing that it would be well at last with the righteous, although they were often grieved with the actual prosperity of the wicked;—all this is full of most plain instruction to us, who are walking still by faith and not by sight, amidst so much of evil around us and within us. Here in these three cases, when the lessons are taken from the four Gospels, or from the Epistles, or from the Prophets, the benefit to be gained from them is for the most part clear to every one.

But with the historical books, except the four Gospels, the case is different. These are an account of men's actions towards God and towards one another, as well as of God's dealings with them. They are an account, therefore, of that which is no certain example to us; for the actions of men are sometimes good and sometimes bad; sometimes therefore to be followed and sometimes not. Yet although this applies to all histories of men's proceedings, yet it is the case with some much less than others. For instance, with regard to the Acts of the Apostles, although it is true that neither Peter nor John nor Paul are infallible examples, yet they were men so largely endowed with the graces of the Spirit as well as with the miraculous gifts, that in reading the Acts every one feels that he is reading an account full of direct instruction; there is matter of example for us in almost every page.

Again, there are some portions of the Scriptures which contain a record, if I may so speak, of God's acts rather than of man's: such, for instance, as the account of the creation, of the flood, of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, of the deliverance of the children of Israel out

of Egypt, and other such passages. Now, as on the one hand, these are not recorded for us to do likewise,—for it is not ours to kill or to make alive, to create or to destroy,—so on the other, the dealings of God with His creatures must always be a solemn and improving matter for their thoughts; and although He may neither punish nor deliver now exactly after the same manner as of old, by the flood or the fire, or by making the sea a way for His ransomed to pass over, yet we have full assurance that He will punish and deliver after a manner far more complete.

Thirdly, there is a considerable part of the historical Scriptures which contains the law which God gave to His people Israel. Here again there is little difficulty in the broad divisions of the subject, though there may be much in the details. We know that such chapters as the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth chapters of Deuteronomy, which are the proper lessons for three successive Sundays after Easter, are full of instruction; inasmuch as they relate generally to those great moral points in the relations between God and His people, which are the same in the Christian Israel as in the Israel that was after the flesh. Other chapters again, such as the sixteenth, which is the lesson for Whitsunday, give an account of the Israelitish festivals, or other matters which are clearly ceremonial; but in which there were often certain correspondences or likenesses to the great Christian festivals, or to the truths which they commemorate. And the object in reading such lessons in the church is to draw our attention to these correspondences, and at the same time, while we mark them, to mark also the difference between the old institutions and the new; the contrast between them being often not less useful to study than the resemblance.

Fourthly, there are parts of the Scripture, which although they relate the actions of men, yet relate them

chiefly as they are dealing with God's people by His command, such as the greatest part of the lives of Moses, Samuel, and Elijah ; and here too the conduct is so much more God's than man's, if I may be allowed so to speak, that where it is not matter of example, it is like the actual dealings of God Himself, matter for serious and devout thought and study.

Lastly,—that I may not weary or confuse the memory by going into every minute division,—there remains either the general history of persons or nations in the whole course of their lives or existence, or such parts of the history of either, as though done by the command or under the sanction of God, are done towards those who are for that time at least in the condition of God's enemies ; whether they be strangers naturally to His covenant, or, as in the case of idolaters amongst the Israelites themselves, had made themselves strangers to it by their own actions. And this last division comprehends, I think, all those parts of Scripture of which the study is most difficult. Of the first kind is the life of David, running through the two first books of Samuel, and part of the first book of the Kings ; as well as the life of Solomon, and the kings of Israel and Judah in general. Of the second kind is the greater part of the books of Joshua and Judges, as also very large parts of those of Samuel, the Kings, and the Chronicles ; and of this kind in particular are the two chapters which have been chosen for the two first lessons for this day.

These two lessons then describe a war between the Israelites and the Canaanites ; that is, the dealings of God's people with those who were strangers to His covenant. They touch then one of the very points of conduct in which the line of difference is drawn in the very broadest colours between the Christian Israel and the Israel after the flesh. The Israel after the flesh did, and might do

lawfully, what to the Christian Israel is a sin. ‘Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies.’ These few words of our Lord’s, marking one great point in our moral nature, in which the Christian was to differ widely from good men of the older dispensation, take away at once out of the class of Scripture examples every passage whatever in which good men of the Israel after the flesh are described to us as dealing with their enemies; whether by this term we mean their own personal enemies, or the enemies of their nation and of God.

When, therefore, we read the words of the text, ‘Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent,’ we have no need, as far as the satisfaction of our own conscience goes, to make any inquiry whether these words were spoken by inspiration or not; whether Deborah and Barak, in uttering this song, spake as the prophet and prophetess of God, or as the victorious and rejoicing leaders of a people whom they had just rescued from slavery. So far as our conduct is concerned, this inquiry is wholly superfluous. If she whom they blessed was blessed then in truth, yet we know with perfect assurance that whosoever of us were now to do likewise would not be blessed but cursed. There is absolutely nothing in the tone and feeling of this song of Deborah and Barak with reference to their triumph over the Canaanites, which we ought, nay, which we might dare to imitate. Thus much is plain, without a moment’s hesitation, that the lesson for this evening’s service contains in these points no direct instruction in righteousness.

But what then is its instruction, what its use? It has much of both, but of a kind not easily to be gained,

nor by every one ; and therefore it may well be doubted how far such portions of the Scripture have been wisely chosen to form a part of our public service. Certainly it scarcely any lessons have been taken out of the book of Revelation, because of their difficulty ; if so few in comparison have been chosen from the Prophets, probably for the same reason ;—much more cause was there why they should not have been taken from the books of Joshua and Judges. For the difficulty in the Revelation and in the Prophets is chiefly of a kind which would give to ignorant persons no notions at all ; but here there is a worse danger, lest they should fancy that they understand, and go away with notions absolutely false and mischievous. The instruction furnished by these chapters of Judges, is indeed great for those who can receive it ; but it is not obvious, nor can it be gained without much thought and knowledge. Most instructive is it to see such a state of moral ignorance prevailing as would absolutely have been injured rather than benefited had all truth been then presented to it. Most awfully does it set forth the toil of our nature, and how great is the struggle, if I may be allowed so to speak, of God's light in breaking into the darkness of our hearts, that they who were disposed to serve God knew not how to serve Him worthily ; that they who wished to do good, and to advance the cause of good, had not yet learnt that great law of faith, that good must be left undone, and the cause of good trusted humbly to the hands of God, if we can only do it, or promote its interest, by means unholy and forbidden.

Yet this blessing pronounced on Jael, when taken in its true spirit, is in perfect accordance with God's universal dealings with mankind. I would not blame those who, as a matter of criticism, were to contend that we have no

grounds whatever for supposing the song of Deborah and Barak to be recorded as an inspired hymn; that is a question not to be answered in the foolish and hasty way in which some persons are apt to settle it; but on which this is not the place to enter. But be this as it may, we need not lose the benefit of the words of the text; they may be true, though not inspired. Their spirit is, that God does allow largely for ignorance where He finds sincerity; that they who serve Him honestly up to the measure of their knowledge, are according to the general course of His providence encouraged and blessed; that they whose eyes and hearts are still fixed upwards, on duty, not on self, are precisely that smoking flax which He will not quench, but cherish rather, till the smoke be blown into a flame.

So it was with Christ's own apostles. Amidst how much of ignorance, how much, according to His own very words, of incapability to receive His full truth, did He yet receive them into communion with Him, and give them the blessed name of His friends, and pronounce them with one exception, to be all clean. And turn to a later period,—to some of those scenes in the Christian Church which most resemble the case of Jael; to some of those stories of persecution, where good men,—alas the while for human nature!—were both the victims and the executioners. When we read some of those sad yet glorious martyrdoms, amidst all our unmixed admiration for the sufferers, may we not in some instances hope and believe that the persecutors were moved with a most earnest, though an ignorant zeal, and that, like Jael, they sought really to please God, although like her they essayed to do it by means which Christ's Spirit condemns? If this be not so, what shall we say of two of the purest and brightest names of their day, of Calvin and of Cranmer? Can we

doubt that it was a sincere, though ignorant zeal for God's glory, which led Cranmer in particular—a man constitutionally the very reverse of hard or cruel—to urge the young King Edward VI., in spite of all his reluctance, to condemn a heretic to the flames? And what if it be said, as is most true, that there is a great deal of ignorance which is not excusable but sinful; that men can and do often deceive themselves, and fancy that they are serving God, while they are really serving their own evil passions? All this, indeed, is most important to us in judging of ourselves, in leading us for ever to suspect our own hearts, lest they call that ignorance or honest error, which is in reality falsehood and sin; but yet it does not interfere with that other truth, which is very useful towards softening our judgments of others, that if there be a sinful ignorance there is an innocent ignorance also; that God the Judge of all will infallibly decide which is the one and which the other; but that if it be innocent ignorance, there the sincere faith and desire to please God shall be blessed, notwithstanding its lack of knowledge.

And for ourselves, how great is the lesson here given us of the necessity of a sincere obedience. For if the single-minded man be accepted, even amid much moral ignorance, what becomes of those who are double-minded amidst abundant knowledge? What will be said of us, if being taught all divine truth, if being able to see, which she could not see, that Jael's act was evil, we have yet nothing of her zeal; which if joined with our knowledge, would burn indeed with a heavenly flame? What inheritance can we expect in her blessing, who without any of her excuses for evil are full of evil; who with far more than her reasons for serving and loving God, will yet neither serve Him nor love Him? Right and good is it that we should condemn the acts of many of those recorded in the Old Testament, for we have seen what prophets and

righteous men for many an age were not permitted to see ; but no less right and needful is it, that we should imitate their fearless and earnest zeal,—without which, we in our knowledge are without excuse ; with which, they, by reason of their unavoidable ignorance, were even in evil deeds blessed.

RUGBY CHAPEL: *June 8, 1834.*

SERMON IX.

JUDGMENTS AND CHASTISEMENTS.

2 SAMUEL xxiv. 14.

And David said, I am in a great strait : let us fall now into the hand of the Lord ; for his mercies are great : and let me not fall into the hand of man.

WE are all familiar with these words of David, his answer to the prophet who came to him from God with a choice of one of three heavy judgments : the pestilence, famine, or war. And the choice which he made is one which we feel was wisely made. He preferred any of those evils which arise directly from the hand of God acting upon natural causes, to those which are produced by the evil passions of men. He thought it better to suffer three days' pestilence, or three years' famine, rather than to taste all the miseries of unsuccessful war in a three months' flight before an invading enemy.

Now the evils by which this country is threatened at this time are of both these kinds ; both natural,—that is to say, such as befall us without being in any degree caused by other men,—and moral evils, by which I mean evils that are occasioned by the fault of men, whether ourselves or others. The prayers which have been appointed for this day's service allude chiefly to the former class of evils, not that they are by any means the greatest, but because, with regard to these, people are all of the same mind ;

whereas when we speak of moral evils, or those caused by the fault of man, there is a very great difference of opinion about them, and these differences are very apt to excite angry feelings. Still the opportunities afforded by this day would be greatly wasted, if, while turning our minds towards the evils which assail or threaten the country, we were to omit those from which we have infinitely the most to fear, and from which we may, with a far stronger assurance of faith, pray to God to deliver us.

First, however, I will say a few words on the natural evils which are besetting us; that is, on the new and fatal disease which has appeared in several parts of the kingdom, and which is likely to spread itself over the whole of it. It is a very old remark, that new and alarming dangers are apt to breed a great deal of folly and superstition. Men's minds become highly excited, and their feelings far outrun their judgment. All sorts of exaggerated notions therefore have been entertained about the present disorder, and in particular it has been represented as a punishment sent by God for our great and universal sinfulness. Undoubtedly our sins are great, and it would be a most false and mischievous representation which should endeavour to palliate them. But the aspect of the present disease seems to me by no means that of a judgment of God upon our sins. Of course no one could dare to speak of it as a judgment in the cases of individuals; we know that it would be equally false and uncharitable to think that they whom it carried off were greater sinners than those whom it spared. And with regard to the nation, it has not hitherto been in any degree so destructive as to weaken the power or diminish the resources of the country; in fact, nationally speaking, it has been no more felt than the ordinary diseases of every common season. On the contrary, far from regarding it as a judgment of God in His anger, it seems to me to bear far more of the character of a chasten-

ing given in His mercy. Both to individuals and publicly, it is capable of being most profitable, and has in fact in a great many instances actually been so. As I said on a former occasion, it has warned men most usefully of the uncertainty of life, while it has encouraged temperance, and called forth a considerable exertion of active charity. It has been a timely interruption to political violence, and has given men a subject of common interest, on which not only they could not quarrel, but which placed them towards each other in relations of mutual kindness; and though, like all other chastisement, it 'seemeth for the present not to be joyous, but grievous,' and though we may lawfully pray to be delivered from it, as from all other visitations of pain and suffering, yet we must feel at the same time, that we cannot certainly know whether it is best for us that our prayer should be answered; and assuredly if it be not answered, we may be certain that the refusal does not proceed from God's anger, but from His fatherly love.

How is it then, it may be asked, that we read so often in the Old Testament of pestilence sent as a judgment for sins past, not as a chastisement to warn from sins to come? There are several answers to be made to this question. In the first place, the visitations there spoken of differ from the present case in some important particulars. The destruction was very much greater, and more instantaneous; that is, it did not offer an opportunity for the exercise of those virtues which have been called forth by the present danger. The sight of seventy thousand persons cut off in three days, as on the occasion to which the text relates, was likely to make men overwhelmed with fear, or hardened by desperation; while the evil came in such a moment that there was no time for any wholesome preparation to meet it profitably, or to take any measures for lessening its dangers. But the great distinction between

the visitations of pestilence under the old dispensation and under the new, may be best understood by reading the prayer of Hezekiah, composed by him in a dangerous sickness; and by observing how little it could be the language of a good Christian now. Hezekiah earnestly prays against death, because it would cut him off from God: 'The grave cannot praise thee,' he says; 'death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.' Compare this with St. Paul's language: 'Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; and we are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.' It is manifest that a grievous disease falling upon a people whose promises were earthly, was a very different thing, as marking God's disposition towards them, from the same disease falling upon a people whose promises are heavenly. What was in the one case a sentence of death, is in the other a removal to glory. Then, if a parent saw his whole family dying around him, his wife expiring by his side, while he felt his own life ebbing fast within him, would he not have regarded himself as suffering the very last extremity of God's judgments, in not only cutting off himself, but all his hopes of posterity also; so that his name and race would be utterly put out? But suppose the same case in a Christian family,—Christian, I mean, not in name only, but in deed and in power,—and what before was the extremity of judgment becomes the utmost perfection of mercy. It is a grief for a parent to leave young children behind him, when he cannot but fear that the promise of their early years may in after life, when he can no longer watch over them, be wrecked for all eternity. But to be called to his Saviour with all those whom he most loves; to be released at once from all earthly care; to have done with earth not only for himself, but for his wife and children also; to have reached his home in safety with all his treasures, not

only with none to mourn as lost, but with none to fear for as yet in danger ;—the fondest range of hope could go no farther than to imagine such a rich abundance of blessing.

Or to come to our own experience. We know with what an unusual degree of sickness we in this place are at this moment visited ; that there are now four persons lying dead in this town, all of whom one fortnight ago were in no more danger of death than any of us here assembled. Are we to call this a judgment of God in His anger. God forbid ! Much rather is it a dispensation most mercifully designed ;—would that it might be received by us in an answering spirit ! It warns us indeed with a striking voice, to become Christians in earnest with all speed ; to put on Christ, and to put off all our sinful affections. If we do not listen to it, be assured that our continued health and prosperity is one of the most awful judgments of all. No sentence is so dreadful as that when God says of the sinner, ‘ Let him alone.’ The pestilence may cut him off in the midst of his sin ; but better even so than to be year after year hardened and encouraged in it, and thus to be daily swelling its amount. But if we do become Christians indeed, then the voice which was so solemn is but the gracious call of a loving Saviour. The servants who were ready, busily employed in preparing for their Lord’s coming, zealously assisting one another, and looking forward for the hour when he would visit them,—they assuredly felt nothing but a bounding joy when, at whatever hour, in the deepest midnight, or the full noon-day, they heard the signal of his presence.

If this day leads us to consider all this, to hear both in the sickly season immediately around us, and in the disease which is prevailing elsewhere, nothing but God’s warning and earnest call,—the chastening of His love, not the judgment of His anger,—then indeed it will be blessed to

us. But it will be vain, and worse than vain, if with hearts full of worldly fear and spiritual hardness, trembling at the thought of pain and sickness and death, careless of sin and of eternal judgment, we pour out our unholy prayers to be delivered merely from worldly sufferings. And should God hear such prayers so offered? Nay, verily, the worst scorn with which unbelievers regard this day's solemnities, would be deserved by us, and more than deserved, if our devotion be no more than cowardice, if our desire be for worldly and not for spiritual deliverance.

But the evil of disease is neither the only, nor by any means the worst evil which at this moment threatens our country. In this there are, even to the actual sufferers,—the friends, I mean, of those whom it carries off,—many circumstances of great comfort; and to society at large it will be, and indeed has been already, as I said before, the means of calling forth a larger measure of mutual kindness and charity. But the other evils have nothing whatever to palliate them; they are bad, and merely bad, from the beginning to the end. I speak of those violent passions, that impatience, and pride, and covetousness, and revenge, and brute ignorance, and hatred of law and authority, and selfish indifference to the degraded state of our brethren, and insolence, and extortion, and oppression, which, becoming more aggravated every hour, must inevitably ere long lead to the destruction of our prosperity at once nationally and individually, at once as far as regards this world and as far as regards the world to come. All these different kinds of wickedness, not existing of course in the same persons, but according to the party or class of society to which we belong,—some being the besetting sins in one case, and others in another,—are yet all conspiring together to bring about the same ruin. And together with all these, or rather as the very fountain from

which they all spring, there is the bitter root of ungodliness,—existing, not exactly under the same form, but with the same fatal power, in the unprincipled and wicked of both parties; showing itself on one side in a bitter hatred of all the forms of religion, because they may sometimes be accompanied with the spirit also; attended on the other with a great semblance of attachment to these same forms, because experience has shown that they do not necessarily ensure the spirit; and so long as they do not do this, bad men on one side find them politically convenient, just as bad men on the other hold them to be a political evil. We find on one side, the blasphemy occasioned by worldly discontent and distress, as when Job was advised to curse God and die; and on the other, the inward blasphemy of the gay and luxurious, who say in their hearts, ‘Tush, the Lord shall not see, neither doth the God of Jacob regard it.’

All this evil is so great and so prevalent, that we may almost use the words of the prophet, ‘I looked, and there was none to help: I wondered that there was none to uphold.’

But the difficulty of turning this to profit on occasions like the present, arises from the mixed nature of our common congregations; and from the absolute harm which is done to either side, or class, or party, by dwelling in their hearing upon the faults of the other. One is restrained, therefore, from going into the particulars of the evil on either side so fully as we might do, because the other side would hear it with pleasure, and would but be confirmed in their own faults the more. Here, however, the congregation consists so much of one particular class in society, the higher or richer class, that their faults may be safely dwelt upon; not that the poor have not theirs also, but because it does *us* nothing but harm to think of these, as it seems to afford a sanction to our own. Every one

must have noticed the delight with which they who want an excuse for selfishness and a grudging spirit lay hold of any alleged instance of ingratitude or improvidence on the part of the poor. The faults of the poor, the sins of the avowed enemies of religion and of our national institutions, however great they may be, do not concern us; our true business is with our own.

I have before, in this place and elsewhere, noticed our great sin,—*ours*, that is, as belonging to the richer classes,—that we measure ourselves by one rule and our neighbours by another; we think that a very little will do for others, while for ourselves we think we can never have enough. And this is the case with intellectual enjoyments as well as with bodily; a very little knowledge, a very scanty measure of social enjoyment, very little show of civility, and next to none of respect and attention to their feelings, are enough, in our judgment, for those beneath us; while for ourselves, sea and land are ransacked, the utmost ingenuity of man is exercised, to furnish us with new information, with new excitement, to carry to the utmost possible perfection the polish and refinement of our own social intercourse. And this spirit infects us all more than we are aware of; it is a habit gained in childhood, and it goes on with us in after life, in many instances without our being aware of it. I have known good and kind-hearted persons speak so coldly and behave so distantly to those of an inferior station, that a foreigner, not acquainted with our manners, nor with the character of the individuals, would have ascribed it at once to insolence and pride. But though the excuses for individuals doing this are many, from the cause that I have mentioned, namely, that they do it from habit, and without thinking of it, yet it is no less wrong in itself; and like all other wrong things tends to produce evil to society at large. This manner is practised unintentionally on one side, and

received as a matter of course on the other; but even while it breeds no ill-will, it effectually checks any feelings of positive regard; and when in process of time this cold and neutral state of feeling comes to be tampered with by those who wish to change it into active hatred, they find it but too easy a ground to work upon. Then the reserve and distance which had before only prevented cordiality, comes to be looked upon as an actual insult, and as such awakens resentment; nor is the length of time which it has lasted considered in any other light than as swelling the amount of the wrong, and therefore adding to the violence of their hoped for vengeance.

True it is that manner is but an outward thing, and does not always show the state of the heart. But when our notice is called to it, it is at least a good ground for examining a little anxiously whether indeed all is right and sound within. I cannot but think, that if we really possessed a true Christian love of our brethren, if we felt towards them as brethren, not as towards what are called, and most sadly miscalled, objects of charity,—that we should insensibly assume towards them a very different outward manner also. At any rate this is certain, that the national evil produced by the behaviour I have been speaking of, is most enormous. It is a folly to think that any money given away in alms can at all make up for the want of kindness. He is in fact doing a double mischief to the poor, who, while he alienates their hearts by his pride, makes himself useful to their necessities by his money; he is doing what he can to degrade them, to make them wear an outward show of respect and gratitude and dependence towards one whom in their hearts they can neither esteem nor love. But on the other hand, kindness without money may do very much indeed; and the comfort is, that there is no one amongst us who cannot be kind, however small may be his ability to give alms.

There is no one among us who may not make his daily intercourse with every one in a poorer station a means of increasing mutual charity, instead of exciting mutual aversion. You know full well the vexations which you are sometimes guilty of towards some of our neighbours ; not of any serious amount, and still less purposely inflicted ; but still galling and annoying, and tending to perpetuate what is unkind between one class and another, rather than what is friendly. I am sure that you are not aware of the full extent of the mischief created by these apparent trifles ; but when you think of the number of schools in England ; and that in the neighbourhood of each of them something of the same thing is going on, it is easy to imagine, that the effect on the whole may be felt even nationally. But at any rate, whether the effect be more or less, the mischief to our own hearts is the same ; opportunities for kindness are kept out, and a careless and insulting habit finds its way into them.

In other places there are other matters on which I might have dwelt with propriety in addition to this ; but I know of none where this could have been rightly omitted. And now in conclusion, the sum and substance of this day's solemnity is to nourish in us feelings of love towards God and man. Whether we fear disease,—love towards God in Christ and an unwearied kindness towards one another, will take away its sting, and turn it into a blessing ; or if we fear civil commotions and revolution,—love to God and man is again the only oil that can appease the raging waters ; the one love enkindling the other, till,—if for no other reason, yet for this alone, because of our strong sense of our common brotherhood in Christ Jesus, because God so loved us,—we also should all love one another.

SERMON X.

THE DISOBEDIENT PROPHET.

1 KINGS xiii. 26.

And when the prophet that brought him back from the way heard thereof, he said, It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the Lord.

IN considering the chapter from which these words are taken, and which was the first lesson for this morning's service, it seems best first to explain such parts of it as may need explanation, considered merely as a story; and then to show what parts of it, and in what respects, afford instruction to us: two things very different in themselves, and requiring always to be kept distinct.

Taking then the account of the disobedient prophet merely as the account of a past event, and wishing to understand it merely as such, we may wish perhaps to know why the prophet who came from Judah was commanded neither to eat nor drink at Bethel; and still more, why the old prophet should have been so anxious to persuade him to do what was forbidden him. Now the reason why the prophet who came from Judah was neither to eat nor to drink at Bethel, nor to return by the same way that he had set out, was in order to show that Jeroboam and his people were fallen away from the true commonwealth of Israel, that the bond of brotherhood between them and Judah was broken off utterly; that

they were become to the servants of God like heathen men and publicans, with whom they were to hold no intercourse. As St. John desires the Christians not to receive into their house certain men who by their evil deeds had broken the bond of Christian communion, nor even to bid them God speed,—‘for he that biddeth them God speed,’ he adds, ‘is partaker of their evil deeds,’—so the prophet of God, who was bearing the message of God’s judgment against Bethel, was to have no friendly intercourse with its people ; he was to keep himself aloof from them, and even to return by a different road, lest by renewing his acquaintance with any of the inhabitants whom he had seen on his first journey, he might be the more tempted to hold intercourse with them, and to linger on his way home.

This being the reason of the command given to the prophet of Judah, we are now to consider what motives the old prophet could have had to tempt him to disobedience. The old prophet must be supposed to have been one who had taken part heartily with Jeroboam in separating himself from the common worship at Jerusalem ; one who had strongly supported the setting up the altars at Bethel and at Dan. He would, therefore, be ill pleased to see his own conduct and that of his countrymen declared to be so sinful, as that God’s prophets might hold no communion with them. He would feel the command issued to the prophet to be a reproach upon him and on his cause, and knowing the effect of old habits and impressions upon the people at large, he would be afraid lest they themselves should be shocked at finding themselves so utterly condemned as unholy by a prophet of Jerusalem, and lest they might desire to escape from his censures by conforming again to the worship of the tribe of Judah. As Saul had besought Samuel to turn with him, and honour him before the elders of his people

and before Israel, so this old prophet wished to persuade the prophet of Judah to abate something of his severity ; to enter into his house and eat of his bread and drink of his cup, that so the people might think that their conduct was not so utterly condemned at Jerusalem ; that the prophet, while bearing a message of severity, was himself inclined to think it too severe ; that, whilst denouncing a judgment, he acted as if he did not himself believe that it would come to pass. For men's actions are more than their words ; and it would have been of little consequence that the prophet in public, and in his official character, if I may so speak, should have denounced Jeroboam and his worship as sinful, if privately, and in those moments when a man's real sentiments appear, he should hold friendly intercourse with one of the prophets of that worship, and enter with him into the sacred relations of hospitality.

Such were the old prophet's motives ; motives arising out of no hatred to the prophet of Judah, but simply from a wish to make it appear that the cause of the worship of Bethel was not so evil as might be thought from the prophet's public message, and that the prophet by his own acts showed that he himself did not so regard it. And therefore, when he found that the prophet had fallen a victim to his policy, that he had been himself condemned for lowering in a manner the sentence of God's condemnation against others, then his heart smote him ; and while he mourned for him whom his arts had ruined, and said over his grave, 'Alas, my brother !' he confirmed with his own lips the voice of that sentence on which he had vainly endeavoured at the price of so much guilt to throw discredit.

But now if from understanding this story, as a thing which took place in Judea so many hundred years ago, we proceed to ask what is its meaning for us, and what

instruction we may derive from it, then the answer must be given warily and with knowledge, or else we shall turn the Scripture to our hurt, and not to our benefit.

Here, as everywhere else in the Scripture, the spirit of the story is an eternal lesson; the letter of it, as in so many other parts of the Old Testament, must be looked upon as passed away. I mean that it is a lesson for us if we take into our account the differences between our situation and that of the Jews: if we do not do this, it will then absolutely mislead us. Now, before I proceed to apply this rule to the story of the disobedient prophet, I will show its necessity by another part of the same chapter, where it says that ‘Jeroboam made of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places;’ and adds immediately, ‘That this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam.’ Now I have actually met with comments upon this passage, which have argued from it against appointing Christian ministers from what are called the lower orders. This is a complete instance of the mischief of quoting the letter of the Scripture, and not its spirit. It is surely not hard to know that the priesthood among the Jews, as amongst almost all ancient nations, was confined to one particular family; that no one who was not of the seed of Aaron could lawfully be made a priest. It might be known also that the priest’s business was not to teach, but to offer sacrifice; and that Christian ministers are in no respect like the priests among the Jews, but rather like the prophets. Now the prophets were chosen from any family, and from any condition of life: for instance, the prophet Amos was chosen from the lowest of the people, for he was a herdsman: and in like manner, the first and greatest Christian ministers, our Lord’s own Apostles, were fishermen, or engaged in other employments equally

humble. The letter, therefore, of this passage about Jeroboam has passed away; we have no priests under the Gospel, and our prophets or ministers, like the prophets of old, may be taken freely from any family, or from any condition of life. But the spirit of it remains; that is, it is a grievous sin to appoint as a Christian minister any man who wants that quality which is as essential to the Christian ministry as being born of a particular family was essential to the Jewish priesthood. This quality is holiness; and he who were to consecrate to our ministry whosoever would,—whosoever wished to enter it, let his ignorance or his wickedness be ever so great,—he, and he only, would be guilty in this matter of the sin of Jeroboam.

Now then, we must apply the same rule to the whole story of the disobedient prophet. If we do not, a Roman Catholic might very falsely apply it as condemning all Protestants, or a member of the Church of England might use it as falsely as condemning all Dissenters. A Roman Catholic might say that our King Edward VI. did exactly what Jeroboam did; that he would not let his people go up to Rome to worship, as they had been used to do, but set up another worship of his own in England, like the high places at Bethel and at Dan. And a Churchman might in the same way argue that the Dissenters were like Jeroboam: that they, too, had separated from the worship of their fathers, and had made places of worship for themselves. And so both would be ready to speak the language of the prophet of Judah, and think it right to hold no intercourse with Protestants in the one case, with Dissenters in the other, according to the command given to the prophet. They would say also, that those who argued in favour of toleration, that they who spoke at all in defence of Protestants or of Dissenters, were false servants of God, like the old prophet of Bethel; trying to

make that appear innocent, or at most a light fault, which in God's judgment was a great one. Many, I dare say, would shrink from the practical conclusion of this sort of reasoning, who yet, far from seeing its fallacy, might themselves, in other matters, be tempted to apply the Scriptures just in the same way. But here again, the spirit of the story is our wholesome food, the letter is poison. It was one of the very main points of the Jewish worship, that it should be performed in one place only ; in that place which the Lord should choose to set His name there. The sacrifices were to be offered in one place, and by the one high priest of the nation ; other sacrifices offered by other priests were all forbidden. But forasmuch as our worship is now changed, in that prayer and sacrifice are dissevered, and prayer is our only earthly worship, therefore, whilst our sacrifice is still as of old offered in one place only, in the presence of God, by our own High Priest who is passed into the Heavens, and as all other sacrifices for sin, which we should strive vainly to offer, would be as abhorred as the golden calves of Bethel and of Dan,—so of that other part of worship, prayer and praise, it is expressly said that it may be offered lawfully alike in every place. Not in the mountain of Gerizim only, nor in Jerusalem, shall they worship the Father, who worship Him in spirit and in truth : whenever and wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there is He in the midst of them.

We cannot, then, apply the story to ourselves according to its literal meaning, and it would be nothing but mischievous to do so ; yet its spirit affords us here, too, a most valuable lesson. We know full well what *is* a going away from God's true worship, and setting up for ourselves our idols at Bethel and at Dan. There are enough who do so, men who do not cast off the Christian

name altogether,—it was still the God of Israel whom Jeroboam professed to worship,—but who take such a view of Christ's service as best suits their inclinations, forming their judgments and often regulating their practice by another standard. Now when God's prophets speak to such persons of God's holiness, of His righteous law, and of the entire service which He claims; when they tell them of the danger of their state, and that they are not living a life of Christian faith,—are there none who, like the old prophet of Bethel, endeavour to lessen the effect of this language, by tempting those who speak it to too free compliances themselves with evil or with doubtful things, that so their lives and actions may seem to disclaim the strictness of their preaching, and they may appear not really to believe the judgment which they feel bound publicly and officially to threaten? Surely the true lesson taught us by the story of the disobedient prophet is, that our actions should go along with our words; that the evil which in our speaking or writing or teaching we condemn we should show that we renounce wholly in our conduct; not stopping to parley with it, not going a certain way along with it, but utterly shunning it and abhorring it.

Nor is this lesson only of use to those who are as the prophets of the Christian Israel, who are bound to speak openly to their brethren the words of God's commandments. Parents, masters of families, all who are ever called upon to exercise authority or influence over the conduct of others,—it is for them to see that they hold no intercourse themselves with the evil which they condemn; that they should appear plainly to speak to others not because it is decent or proper so to speak, but because they believe it to be true, and their hearts as well as their understandings go along with the truth in all

its fulness. In our dealings with our children, how often does it happen that our reproofs are given by fits and starts, or because we think it proper to reprove ; but our behaviour immediately afterwards, and generally when we seem acting most naturally, seems to show that we cannot really think evil so dangerous, or God so greatly to be feared. And if this be so, we shall neither profit our children nor save our own souls. We shall not profit them, because they look to actions more than to words. And if we tell them of God and Christ on a Sunday, and of heaven and hell and eternal glory, and all the week seem to care for none of these things ourselves, will our children think that we are in earnest? Will not the familiar turning in to eat and to drink in the country on which God's judgment had been denounced, outweigh all the effect of our words in denouncing it? And we shall not save our own souls, even though we delivered our message to others ever so faithfully, even though our advice to our children were all that the wisest and holiest man alive could say to them. For God's first command to every man is, that he serve God with all his heart himself, not that he call on others to do so ; and he who does not so serve Him may counsel others with effect, but will surely be himself a castaway.

Yet there is one thing more to be gathered from the words in which the old prophet lamented the death of his disobedient brother. He said, ' The saying which he cried by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel shall surely come to pass.' The man himself lay torn and dead before him ; he had acted as though he did not believe his own word, and therefore he had perished. But the word was true notwithstanding, and would come to pass not the less for the unworthiness of him who delivered it. So it is when God's message is delivered to us now by those whose lives deny it. On their head is the sin of their own un-

belief and disobedience ; but on ours will be our own sin no less, if we refuse to listen to their word. For what they said against the altar in Bethel, against those idols of our own hearts which we make each man for himself to worship, shall surely come to pass. The altar shall be burnt together with those who worship on it ; earth, and they that are of the earth only, and love the earth and bow down before it, shall all be destroyed together. And instead of passing a harsh sentence upon those who spoke to us, while they themselves were disobedient,—may we not often, like the old prophet, take to ourselves some part of their ruin? thinking that our carelessness and disobedience tempted them to join with us in disregarding the message which they delivered, and that therefore our sin is not more to be ascribed to their faulty lives, than the guilt of those faulty lives of theirs belongs to our hardness of heart, and contempt of that word which they declared to us.

RYDAL CHAPEL :

July 20, 1834.

SERMON XI.

THE LYING PROPHETS.

1 KINGS xxii. 23.

Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee.

WE have heard in this afternoon's service the chapter from which these words are taken, so that I need only briefly remind you of the circumstances to which they relate. Ahab, going to make war against Syria, consults the prophets as to the success of his enterprise. All promised him victory, and encouraged him to go to war; all, with one only exception, Micaiah the son of Imlah. Micaiah, on the contrary, told him that the prophets were deceiving him with false hopes; that the war would end in his death, and that God had put a lying spirit into the mouths of all the prophets, because He had spoken evil concerning him; because the time of his judgment was now come. The fact is told in the language of a vision, which very much resembles the opening chapter of the book of Job. There, as in the present instance, spirits both good and evil are represented as presenting themselves before the throne of God, and the evil crave permission of Him to exercise their power upon mankind. It is added that the permission is granted, but so as that it may appear from both stories that evil is made an

instrument of God's purposes, and that He suffers it to go so far as He sees fit, and no farther.

Again the multitude of considerations which these passages of Scripture suggest, can scarcely be confined within the limits of a single sermon. Again there is room for explanation on the one hand, for practical improvement on the other; and I shall try, as shortly as possible, to give something of either sort.

First, in these visions, and in all other passages of Scripture which relate to things invisible, to the things, that is, of another world, it is of great consequence to remember that the descriptions are but the shadow of unseen things, and not the very image of them; that the language is not to be taken as literally true, but as intended, like a parable or story, to convey a truth through the means of fiction. The very words, 'the throne of God,' or, 'God sitting on his throne,' which occur so often in Scripture, are seen, the moment that our attention is drawn to them, to be merely figurative; and 'the spirits standing by on the right hand and on the left,' is an image of the same character. All that we can conclude safely from these visions is the general truth, that God allows us to be tempted, allows us to be deceived; and that both the one and the other may serve for our trial or for our punishment: it is for us so to use them that they may become the former only, and not the latter.

In the next place, in these stories, and in many others in the Scripture, there is but one difficulty, and this difficulty would not be lessened though the doctrine taught by these passages were false instead of true. The difficulty is simply that great one,—I had well nigh said, that only one of our condition; 'Why there is an evil at all in the world?' It is always right to say plainly on the one hand that this is a difficulty which no human understanding

can explain ; and to show on the other hand, that, allowing this one difficulty to be inexplicable,—as it must be equally, whether we believe the Scriptures or no,—and trusting at the same time that it will be explained to God's faithful children hereafter as one of the greatest rewards of those who believed though they did not see,—that then the truths in the Scripture which many cavil at, are not only true, but most profitable ; that we need not be afraid of the passages which contain them, nor try to explain away their meaning, but that we should consider them and study them attentively, and that then we shall find, if I may be allowed to repeat words which I have used before, that the deepest difficulties and the most blessed truths are to be found hard beside one another.

Are we then offended to hear that the Lord hath put a lying spirit into the mouth of any man ? Let us confess indeed, that how there should be such a thing as a lying spirit in the universe, where the God of truth is Lord, passes all our comprehension ; but that this being so,—though how or why we know not,—and our own experience telling us too certainly that it is so, it is no wonder that God should not leave it utterly running wild ; that He should subject it in some sort at least to His dominion, and make it, evil as it is in its own proper nature, the instrument at least to others, (since He sees fit not to destroy its nature,) of His own purposes of good.

And if we say again, What purposes of good ?—for that this lying spirit was put into the mouth of the prophets not to benefit Ahab, but to help forward his ruin ; the answer is,—and we were all at once fit for heaven if we felt the truth, as well as expressed it with our lips,—the answer is, that the existence of evil is indeed a mystery, but that the punishment and destruction of evil is one of the greatest of goods. And if we laboured in this

work where alone we can labour at it quite purely and safely, that is, at the utter destruction of all evil within our own hearts; for while destroying it in others, evil passions so mix in the work that we create as much as we destroy;—but if we did labour heartily and intensely at the destruction of our own hearts' evil, if we did feel how great it was, how entirely God abhors it, and how blessed a thing it must be to destroy it, then indeed we should share the mind of the Spirit of God and be fit for communion with Him. It is indeed a solemn truth that the destruction of evil should be so great a good; for it is one which is our own condemnation. Yet so it is, and it is an attribute no less closely connected with the nature of God, than His unfailing mercy to the good.

God then makes evil the instrument of good, when He makes it the instrument of the destruction of evil. And this was the case when He put the lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets, because the time of judgment upon Ahab was come. Only here is God's long suffering, that He is slow to consider any man as evil, and therefore fit for destruction: He suspends His judgment upon them till the very hour of death; till then, even His punishments are not without something of chastisement; that is, they may be used for the destruction of the evil that is in the man, so that he himself may be saved. And this was the case with Ahab. For when Micaiah opened the secret of God's counsel against him, the opportunity was given him of turning it to good. God had resolved to encourage to his ruin the wicked and hard-hearted Ahab; but Ahab, humbled and penitent, became another man, and the judgment against his evil self was revealed to him, that he might become another self, and so escape from it. For so it is ever true, that God desireth not the

death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live.

I have dwelt upon points which will not be generally interesting ; but yet it was right to mention them, as there are some to whom it would have appeared unnatural to pass them over unnoticed, and as, uninteresting and obscure as they are to those who have never thought on them at all, so are they in proportion full of interest to those whose minds have once become alive to them. But what remains is of a different character, and concerns us all. The same thing may happen now, does happen in a degree to all of us. An evil spirit is sent into the mouths of the prophets, and it tempts us continually to our ruin.

I notice the circumstance of its being put ‘into the mouths of the prophets,’—not into the mouths of the prophets of Baal, but of the very prophets of the true God,—for the sake of remarking that we are tempted to evil, not always by those who might be supposed to be in favour of evil, but by those too sometimes from whom we might expect good : that even the very love of our friends becomes sometimes a snare to us : and that there is nothing, up to the very Scriptures themselves, the very volume which contains God’s revelations to His creatures, from which the evil heart may not expect to find encouragement to evil, from which it may not be tempted to believe a lie, that so its condemnation may be the surer.

This perhaps may be particularly applied to us, when we, like Ahab, are meditating upon some enterprise ; when we propose to do something, the event of which may be either a great hurt or a great good to us. I am not now supposing the case of a man like Balaam, revolving whether or no he shall do a wicked thing which he much desires to do, and looking out for some excuse to lull his

conscience in doing it. The case of Ahab is different from this; the war against Syria to recover Ramoth-Gilead, which had been formerly taken from Israel, was not in itself a thing unlawful: it was not a thing which it was tempting God so much as to think of. Ahab was deceived, not for his wickedness in the actual matter then before him, but for the general evil of his life; which made that which was innocent in common cases a snare to him.

I cannot give what seems a more complete picture of the general meaning of this passage of Scripture, than by supposing a man of very careless life considering whether or no he should enter into holy orders. It is Ahab's very question, 'Shall I go up against the enemy of God's Israel to battle, or shall I forbear?' And then there are many to answer, 'Go up, for the Lord shall deliver him into thy hand?' You are desiring a good work, and may expect upon it a good issue. And this is true; but what are we that desire it? Are we such as God loves? Have we been so living as that we may be thought fit to be the honoured instruments of His glory? We are desirous now to fight against the enemies of the Lord, but have we ourselves faithfully served Him? or have we not rather been serving Baal? No doubt the work which we desire is good in itself, but it is not good for us. To us, such as we now are, it will be our destruction if we attempt it; and they are but lying spirits, counselling us to our ruin who urge us to venture on it.

What follows from this? Surely, not that we should turn away our thoughts and desires from the ministry of God, but that we should rather fix them on it more steadily long beforehand; that so what is good in itself may be good also to us. Then the lying spirit will have no room to tempt us to our ruin, or rather his words will be no lie, but the very truth; we may go up to the battle of the Lord, and He will be with us, and bless us.

Now, so many years beforehand, most safely may you be encouraged to desire highly the service of Christ's ministry, to think of it as your object, and so to fit yourselves for it. But if not thinking of it now, if not thinking of it at college, if living carelessly and sinfully, serving Baal and despising God,—if then, at the time when it shall suit your worldly convenience, you turn round and say that you desire now to fight the battles of the Lord, then are you become such as that the very loving counsel of your friends is a snare to evil; their encouragements to go on in the course which you propose, are but urging you on to bring upon yourselves the heavier condemnation.

But this need not be confined to one profession only, it belongs to all. In all we may strive against the enemies of the Lord; all are good in themselves, all are lawful objects of desire. Yet all, like Ahab's war' against Syria, will be entered on only to our ruin, if we like him have been habitually serving Baal beforehand. Our friends say well, 'this is an honourable and profitable profession; enter on it and prosper.' They say what is well in itself, but to us it is but the spirit that tempts us to destruction. We have fitted ourselves to receive not the good of the profession, but only its evil; not to make it a means of glorifying God, and being useful in our generation, but to encourage in us either our pride, or our indolence, or our covetousness; or that fault, whatever it be, which the peculiar line of life on which we are going to enter is most likely to foster. For we all know that every line of life has its own temptations; every calling may be made the means of destroying our souls, as well as of saving them; and it is our previous evil dispositions and low principles which will make it to us the evil and not the good. And then it is too late to turn back; we must do something in life, yet we can do nothing safely; God

urges us on to Ramoth-Gilead that we may fall and perish.

Such is the state of those who are preparing to enter upon life,—whatever may be their particular views in it, —under the curse of careless or corrupted principles, with their earlier years unimproved or marked only with sin. If they are saved at last, it may be truly said that they are saved so as by fire ; it is God's marvellous long-suffering and abundant grace, which enables them to turn what was to them evil into good, by being changed themselves from evil ; even as they had in the beginning turned into evil that which was in its nature good, because they had corrupted their way before the Lord, and were marked by Him for judgment.

RUGBY CHAPEL :

August 26, 1832.

SERMON XII.

JOB.

JOB i. 5.

And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

THE book of Job, from which these words are taken, contains in substance some of the most important truths of revelation. The greater part of it consists of a dialogue, in which opposite views, both equally erroneous, are maintained by the principal speakers; till towards the close a new character comes in, and states the truth; which truth is lastly enforced by language represented to come from God Himself. Then Job, who had maintained one of the two erroneous views which had been thus reprov'd, confesses his fault, and throws himself entirely on God's mercy; while his three friends, who had defended the error opposite to his, persisting in it notwithstanding the answers which had been made to them, are declared to have offended, and are commanded to offer for themselves a burnt offering, lest God should punish them. Now the error which they had maintained was this:—Because Job was suffering, they charged him with hypocrisy; for, they argued, had he been really a good

man, God would not have punished him ; he must therefore have only worn the appearance of goodness to deceive men, whilst in his heart he was the servant of sin. And though Job protested against the injustice of this charge against him, and the cruelty of thus adding to his sufferings, they persisted in maintaining it. Job's error on the other hand was this, that he asserted his innocence, not only against men, but against God. He not only denied that he was a hypocrite in the common sense of the term, or a sinner according to man's use and meaning of the word, but he seems to have maintained his innocence in a yet higher sense, as if it could endure God's judgment no less than man's. And for this he is reproved by Elihu, and reminded that although he might justly call himself good, in the common meaning of the word, and justly repel the charge of common hypocrisy, yet that goodness in God's meaning is of a far higher nature ; that when tried by His standard, all are sinners ; and that in His sight can no man living be justified. To this view of the case Job at last yields ; he confesses that he had spoken in ignorance, and that now, better informed of what God is, and of man's infinite unworthiness in His sight, he abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes.

It is manifest that this is exactly the state of mind which is required before a man can embrace God's offer of forgiveness through Christ. And in the book of Job, no less than in the Epistle to the Romans, we find that he who thus casts away his trust in his own righteousness, and acknowledges that in God's sight he is only a sinner, becomes forgiven and accepted ; and that his latter end is better than his beginning.

On the other hand, an exaggerated statement of man's sins, a denial of the goodness of his actions in the common sense of the word goodness, and an attempt to show that the virtues of unbelievers are not virtues in any sense, but

are done from some selfish or unworthy motives ; in a word, an uncharitable spirit, offensive to our common reason and common delicacy while it pretends to be excessively zealous for God's glory,—is condemned strongly in the example of Job's three friends. And it is not a little curious, that the very language of these friends in which their hard and offensive spirit is marked most strongly, has been actually quoted by persons infected with the very same faults of character, and quoted, not as language condemned by the Scripture as erroneous, but actually as if it was itself Scripture. A more remarkable instance could not be afforded of the utter blindness of that system which takes as scriptural truth, applicable to us, whatever is contained in the volume of the Bible, without considering the context or the circumstances under which any given passage was written.

Thus much might perhaps be said, not without propriety, concerning the book of Job as a whole, because it is a portion of Scripture with which many of us, probably, are little familiar, and the object and lesson of which appear many times to be misunderstood. But the words of the text contain in themselves a distinct lesson ; and to this it is now my wish to confine myself.

We see readily what is the statement contained in them. After the days of his sons' feasting were over, Job offered sacrifices of atonement for them, lest in the midst of their enjoyments they might have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. He was afraid lest their pleasures had done them harm, and he wished, if it were so, to remedy it. This is the exact point in the text which it concerns us now to attend to.

One expression, however, seems remarkable. 'It may be,' said Job, 'that my sons have cursed God in their hearts.' He does not say, 'have cursed him with their lips,' for this, as society then was composed, would not

have been the fruit of enjoyment, but of despair. It was when he was reduced to great misery that his wife told him 'to curse God and die.' It was by bringing upon him the utmost extremity of suffering that Satan hoped to tempt him to 'curse God to his face.' But to curse God in the heart is a different thing, and in those times arose from a different state of outward circumstances. In prosperity, men go along with the world around them; they echo its language, because they receive the tribute of its respect; they are content to observe its customs, because the actual constitution of it brings them nothing but what is good. Therefore in an age when the outward profession of religion is fashionable, we shall hear no open blasphemy from the prosperous; and so it was in the days of Job. But the blasphemy of the heart is the natural child of prosperity, where man is corrupt and God is pure. Prosperity makes a man feel strong in himself and confident, but it does not make him feel grateful; because, knowing God to be a holy God, and himself to be alienated from Him, he cannot think that his good things are God's gift, but rather that they are enjoyed in spite of Him. But if enjoyed in spite of Him, he is ever fearing that God may take them from Him, or punish him for enjoying blessings without deserving them. So then he learns to hate God, and the more he enjoys his earthly good things, the more he hates Him. He thinks of Him only as connected with death and judgment, and many are the wishes of his heart that death and judgment might never come, and that there was no God from whom to fear them.

This is the feeling spoken of in the text when full-grown. I trust and believe, that none of us know it in this state of ripeness; but I fear we cannot be unacquainted with its first beginnings. The first beginnings of it are a sense of weariness and impatience when any pleasure is interrupted, or for a short time deferred, by a call to

offer up our prayers to God. The two things seem to us unsuitable to one another. Enjoyment and devotion are in our notions altogether opposite. Sometimes this may proceed from superstition, from judging amiss of God, from feeling towards Him an excess of fear, though accompanied with the deepest reverence. But more often it arises from judging of God and of ourselves too truly ; from knowing that we do not love Him, and being sure, therefore, from our consciences, that He will not love us. And therefore devotion is not a pleasure ; and the form of it, like all other unmeaning forms, can be no better than a weariness. And such persons endure it, though with impatience, when they think they can make it only a form ; they will come to church, they will be present at family prayers ; but when they think that it cannot be so treated, that if partaken in at all, it must be partaken of in sincerity, then they avoid it altogether. And this is the real reason why so many persons attend the common church service, while so few in comparison will be partakers of the Lord's Supper.

Now we have many of us, during the course of the last week, had more than our common share of pleasure ; there has been gaiety, excitement, enjoyment of one kind or another, but all worldly, of which we have almost all tasted. And this in common language is said to unsettle the mind ; that is, to make it feel its common pursuits dull ; to disturb it while engaged in them either with a restless recalling of its past pleasures, or with an equally restless looking forward to their coming again. Thus there is much in them to make us sin, and to draw away our hearts from God ; it being a most certain truth, that whenever we find our duty dull, then the thought of God becomes dull to us also ; we are in the first beginnings of cursing Him in our hearts. So we need that something

be done for us ; that this evil state should be shaken off, lest it grow on to be our ruin.

What then is it that we want ? It is not burnt offerings to atone for evil done, but something to stop evil, actually doing, and living within us. The sweets of the pleasure are now gone ; what enjoyment there was for us in the week past, we have had it all ; it is over, all but the evil of it ; and surely it is our wisdom to get rid of this also. Nay, we may do more ; we may not only get rid of the evil of it, but may still preserve it as good, and may be as glad to have had it, now that it is over, as before it came we earnestly wished to receive it.

If we think of any pleasure as of God's gift, undoubtedly we cannot repent of having had it, but must continually delight to dwell upon it. Now do we think so of our several pleasures of the week past ? Were they God's gift to us or no ? Are we at a loss to answer the question ? Certainly if any of our pleasures were sinful in themselves, they were not God's gift ; of this at least there can be no doubt. Or if not sinful in themselves,—if we abused them by carrying them too far, if they excited in us any bad temper, any bad passion whatever, if they made us proud, or peevish, or jealous, or indolent, or sensual, certainly they were not the gift of our heavenly Father. But suppose they were neither ; that they were innocent, and moderate, not exciting any bad feelings, but rather awakening kindly ones ; that they were in the best sense of the word refreshments to us. Were they then God's gift to us ? Surely they were, if we choose to think them so. It now depends wholly on ourselves ; they were God's gift to us, good and tending to good ; or, pure as they were and wholesome, they had not come from Him, but have done hurt to us rather than good. It depends wholly on ourselves ; they were God's gift to us, if we can thank Him for them at this moment with a sincere heart, and feel

desirous to show by our after-zeal, how much we are grateful to Him for His goodness.

Believe then that they were the gift of God ; believe that God loves you, and that these, as well as all other things which you enjoy, are the fruits of His fatherly affection. Even here it may be said, ‘ If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth ’ ; and here too we may join in the answer made to our Lord when He spoke these words, ‘ Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief.’ We do find it very hard to believe heartily in the fulness of God’s love to us ; and it is something bad in our own hearts that is still our hindrance. But believe heartily that all that we have been enjoying innocently was indeed God’s gift ; believe it really, not merely saying it ; believe that He loves us tenderly ;—then we need no sacrifice of atonement to sanctify our joys to us, and to save us from the punishment of inward blasphemy ; all is atoned for, all is peace and safety ; for we have received the spirit of adoption, and cry Abba, Father ; and the Spirit itself witnesseth with our spirit that we are the sons of God through Jesus Christ. They were God’s gift, one of ten thousand, and amongst the poorest of them all, but yet an earnest of what He will do for us more.

Now then, the sacrifice for sin is no longer needed ; for Christ has died, yea, rather is risen again, and through Him we are accepted and justified. No need then of sacrifice, which if it were needful, we should strive in vain to pay. No need of sacrifice, but much of thanksgiving, much of cheerfulness, much of an earnest zeal to show that we are thankful. God has refreshed us ; let us arise with rejoicing hearts and strength renewed, and go on upon our journey. No more loitering, no ungrateful wasting of the time and spirits which He has given. We must not do dishonour to His goodness, we must not shame our feelings of gratitude. There is our daily work before

us ; with us it is yet day, although there are on whom the night has closed before they could do half they wished to do. It is still the day ; let us hasten to make use of it, blessing God that He has given us strength of body and mind to help us to show our thankfulness. And what if on us too the night close prematurely ; still if such be our feelings, it is no matter ; *our work* will have been done already, for it is our work to love God and His Son Jesus Christ, to be glad to serve Him here, to be happy to be taken from this life to be with Him in glory.

RUGBY CHAPEL :

April 29, 1832.

SERMON XIII.

THE PSALMS.

PSALM xxiii. 1.

The Lord is my shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing.

THOSE who attend ever so carelessly to the several parts of the Church service which vary from one Sunday to another, such as the Psalms and Lessons, must have noticed, I should think, the remarkable beauty and character of the Psalms which have been read this evening, as well as of the first of those which were read this morning. And although the notions about them may be indistinct, yet every one would feel, I think, that such Psalms as have been read this evening were well made a part of the service of the Church ; that there was in them that which fitted them for the expression of the feelings of God's people at all times and in all countries, which rendered them the one perpetual sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving to be offered by the Church to God. But this general sense of the fitness of using the Psalms as a part of our service is very often vague and indistinct ; and when we come to repeat them, we are often at a loss to know what we mean by them ;—how far, that is, we make them our own, and repeat them as our own words and thoughts ; or how far we read them merely as the work of another man, which may be here and there instructive, or even applicable to

ourselves; but which, in many parts, we do but listen to or repeat with our mouths, without at all identifying ourselves with the circumstances or feelings of their writers.

I would wish, then, to state in the first place what appears to be the right view of this question, before I say anything of that particular Psalm from which the words of the text are taken.

Now, first of all, it is clear that if we look upon the Psalms merely as upon so many ancient writings, the works of writers whose names, and, in many cases, whose very age is unknown to us, we should then regard them as altogether expressing the feelings of other men. We might learn from them, in part, where they express any general truths, we might admire their imagery or their devotion, but we could not adopt them as our own language; and many feelings contained in them would be such as to awaken in us no sympathy.

And if we are told upon this view of them that the Psalms are inspired, and are to be regarded as the word of God, I do not think that this tends much to clear our notions, or makes us find them more universally edifying than we did before. For the notion of inspiration with many people, so far as they have any distinct notions about it at all, is, that God makes the human author of an inspired composition, so far as that composition is concerned, to be perfect even as He is himself perfect; that the sentiments which he expresses must be those of perfect goodness and wisdom; and that as God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, so in writings inspired by God the question of the date or circumstances of the human writer is of no importance, because he is but the organ of a wisdom and a goodness to which earthly time and circumstances must of course be altogether indifferent.

Following up this notion, men conclude further, not

unreasonably, that the language of God being all perfect, must be such as they not only may but ought to labour to make sincerely their own ; and that what the Psalmists have said was right and good for them to say, and must be no less right and good in us ; for it is not properly the language of the Psalmist, but of the Holy Ghost. We find now one or more Psalms,—parts of the 69th, for example, and the 109th,—which contain the strongest denunciations and prayers for all manner of evil to come upon the heads of the Psalmist's enemies. This, we say, is inspired language, and therefore it must be right and good. But Christ has told us especially to love our enemies, and to pray not *against*, but *for* those who despitefully use us and persecute us. And lest we should say that this is the rule for our private enemies, but that we may curse heartily and hate the enemies of God and God's church, we find that our Lord did pray for those who crucified Himself, and who in so doing were surely as much acting the part of God's enemies as we could ever dare to say was the case with any man or men in the world. Therefore the perplexity about certain parts of the Psalms has been great and general. Some have tried to get out of the difficulty by a different interpretation of the sacred text, the constant resource of the unwise and ignorant, and which is as constantly a foolish evasion of the point which presses them, and no fair explanation. For instance, some tell us that the expressions, which in our version are rendered as wishes, are in the Hebrew expressed in the future tense ; and that they are not to be rendered as wishes, but as prophecies. And others, again, would have it that all the denunciations of evil in the 109th Psalm are not the wishes of the Psalmist against his enemies, but their wishes against him, which he repeats at length to show their bitterness against him. Others again of a different sort of temper,—whose minds, being naturally unable to distinguish truth and

falsehood, have no sort of difficulty in adopting a whole set of things together, true and false, bad and good alike,—are very angry with all such scruples, and delight in repeating the curses with all possible earnestness, applying them to those whom they call God's enemies now, and who at any rate are opposed to themselves. And at this moment persons of such a spirit hurt no one but their own souls; their wishes of evil, however vehemently uttered, are powerless against others, and only involve themselves in sin. But there have been times, and may well be again, when men not only wished and prayed for evil against their enemies, but took the sword also to execute what they prayed for; so that the Scripture was actually wrested by them to their own destruction; and the Psalms of Christ's Church, in which she has in every age delighted to find the fittest expression for her own feelings of penitence and of supplication, of joy and gratitude, of holiness and love, have been profaned into language such as Antichrist might delight in, have been made a cloak for hatred and bitterness, an excuse for injustice, oppression, and murder.

Now any person who has followed me thus far, will easily perceive that this wickedness is the strict consequence of false notions with respect to inspiration; which false notions being allowed to be true, the fanatical consequence is drawn from them correctly. Wherefore others again, seeing that the consequence is detestable, and observing also from what source it has sprung, proceed to attack it in its very root, and deny either openly, or by implication, the inspiration of the Psalms altogether. They are the writings of good men, it is allowed, but of men good according to the standard of their own time, which standard falls far short of Christian perfection. And, therefore, it is said, although we find much in the Psalms in which we can sympathise, there is also much in which we cannot; and in particular, the wishes of

evil in the 69th and 109th Psalms, and in others like them, were excusable enough in the men of old time, whose rule it was to love their neighbour, and hate their enemy, but could not be repeated by us now without great sin.

Now this opinion takes a view of the Old Testament which, it must be confessed, is not the view of it entertained by our Lord and His Apostles. For, not to press St. Paul's famous declaration to Timothy about the Scriptures of the Old Testament, because some, though as I think erroneously, have given to the passage a different interpretation,—yet whenever the Old Testament is referred to by our Lord or His Apostles, it is clearly spoken of as invested with the highest authority, as being even as we commonly call it, 'the word of God.' Nay, it has so happened, or rather I should say, it has been so ordered, that some of the very most startling passages of the very 69th and 109th Psalms themselves, are referred to by our Lord's Apostles as more than human compositions. The words, 'Let their habitation be void, and no man to dwell in their tents,' are quoted by St. Peter from the 69th Psalm; and those, 'Let another take his office,' are quoted by him from the 109th Psalm, and both are called by him, 'the Scripture which the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David.'

The authority of our Lord and His Apostles justifies then the practice of the Church in regarding the Psalms as inspired, and in adopting them as such to be the language of her own devotions. But the notion of inspiration is in itself often conceived very erroneously. For inspiration does not raise a man above his own time, nor make him, even in respect to that which he utters when inspired, perfect in goodness and wisdom; but it so overrules his language that it shall contain a meaning more than his own mind was conscious of, and thus

gives to it a character of divinity, and a power of perpetual application ; while the man who uttered it partakes of this full meaning in infinitely different degrees, but in no case, it may be said, does he partake of it perfectly ; for to One alone was the Spirit given without measure. The rest of us, even though inspired prophets, have it not granted them to look through all time, nor to understand the full accomplishment of their own words, according to the depth and height of God's wisdom.

Christ's Church takes the Psalms then as her own language, or as the language of her Lord ; not as that of David, nor of any other of the ancient Psalmists, except in part ; that is, there are passages in which their meaning is not her meaning ; for she has been enabled to see more of the true mind of the Spirit than the very prophet who uttered it. For those very Psalms, the 69th and 109th, to which we have referred so often,—St. Peter shows us in what sense the Church takes them, when he names Judas Iscariot as the subject of their denunciations of evil. If Judas could be amongst the enemies spoken of by the Psalmist, then it follows that He whose enemies are denounced is Christ our Lord ; and in that sense His church uses it. But who are His enemies, and, as being His, ours ? Who are they against whom we may and ought to feel an enmity so strong ? Who are they for whose utter destruction we may breathe the most earnest prayers with no breach of charity ? Surely His enemies and ours, till the judgment day shall come, are sin and the author of sin, and they only. Evil men, no doubt, there are in abundance,—men whose designs we must oppose, whose example we must shun, whose society we may and ought to avoid ; but so long as they are those for whom Christ has died, they are not yet declared finally to be His enemies, nor, therefore, may they be ours. But sin is our enemy now, and so is he who is the author of sin,

called by eminence, the Great Enemy. Hate these with an intense hatred, it will not damp but increase your charity. Hate all evil, most of all the evil in your own souls; pray to God in the warmest language to extirpate and destroy it utterly; such prayers are pure and holy; they become the Church of Christ to utter; no evil passion can creep into our bosoms along with the hatred of our own sin.

But if there are Psalms in which the meaning of the Church rises far beyond the meaning of the human Psalmist, yet how much more delightful is it to dwell on those where his meaning and ours are all but the same; where he ministered not to us only but to himself; where the communion of God's people before and after the coming of Christ has nothing to interfere with it; they and we are one with each other in Christ their Lord and ours. And of such a sort is that Psalm from which the text is taken, and in which the Church has expressed this day her abiding confidence in God's protection and love both for life and death. For although in one point the Psalmist was checked as it were on the very edge of the full Christian revelation,—which seems to have been a part of God's dispensation, that the first open revealing of life eternal should be made by Him who purchased it for us by His own blood,—yet surely in the words, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,' &c., there is a hope of which we may say, that it entereth within the veil. He that sowed, and we who are reaping, may in this hope rejoice together.

And if I have said, as I think Christ's word allows us to say, that there are passages in the writings of the old prophets in which the mind of the Spirit who gave them utterance is more truly discerned by us than by them, if the truth of God has to us shaken off some part of the veil which in ancient times disguised its import, and stands

before us more nearly in its own perfect nature,—yet God forbid that this confession of God's grace to us should lead us to be high-minded, or to think that, because of the greater abundance of our revelations, we are nearer to Christ than His holy prophets. If any such feeling does arise within us, let us turn to such Psalms as the twenty-third, and our boasting must surely be changed into the deepest humiliation. For of the faith which worketh by love, and which alone justifies, can we dare to think that we have a larger, nay, that we have in any degree so large a portion, as lived within the heart of the Psalmist? Is his language of faith too hesitating for our full assurance? Is his devotion too cold for our perfect love? Alas! alas! is it not rather the very reverse? that his is the full assurance of faith, the love that casteth out fear; ours the faith as the grain of mustard seed, the love which iniquity has made to wax cold? And then our boasting of superior knowledge may well be changed for fear, when we think of his portion who knew his Lord's will and did it not; and we may remember that it was to those who possessed greater light than had been vouchsafed to the old prophets, that Christ said, 'There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and *all the prophets*, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves cast out.'

RUGBY CHAPEL :

October 4, 1840.

SERMON XIV.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

ST. LUKE iii. 4.

Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

As the lessons which are read from the New Testament are not chosen for the particular Sunday, but are taken in their order according to the day of the month and year, so we cannot expect that there should be any particular harmony between them and the fixed parts of the service, such as the lessons from the Old Testament, and the Epistle and Gospel. But when we do find such a harmony, and can thus connect together all the portions of the Scripture which are read on the same day, the effect is particularly striking. Now this is in a great measure the case with the parts of this day's service. The Gospel speaks of the blessing upon true repentance; and the second lesson for the morning describes the ministry of the preacher of repentance, John the Baptist; while combined with these, the two lessons from the Book of Samuel present us with the two extremes of human nature in the cases of Samuel and the sons of Eli; the last so hardened in sin that they were beyond repentance; the other so early led to God, and so constant in His service, that in the common sense of the term he had no need of it. While again the second

lesson for this evening reminds us, that in the higher and Christian sense we all need it : that by the deeds of the law will no flesh be justified ; for that ‘cursed is he who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.’

From among all these parts of Scripture so bearing upon the same subject, I have taken for my text the words of Isaiah, by which John the Baptist described himself. He said, ‘I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’ And so he has been commonly called the forerunner of Jesus Christ. But it may be that many have never clearly understood what was meant by John being Christ’s forerunner ; why any forerunner was needed, and what truth is declared to us in this part of God’s dispensations, which showed that he *was* needed.

The subject is very vast, and might be illustrated by many examples, taken either from history or from private life. And the truth contained in it is this, that Christ’s work has never been done effectually in men’s hearts, except so far as the work of His forerunner has been done beforehand ; that the baptism of the Holy Spirit requires the previous baptism of water ; or in other words, that no man can profitably receive the truths of the Gospel, unless they find his heart made ready by repentance ; unless they find him in that state that he knows the evil of his heart, and hates it, and longs to be delivered from it.

I shall not dwell long upon the examples from history, but one or two may be mentioned to show what is meant. When St. Paul dwells upon the advantage which Timothy had had in having been taught the Scriptures from his childhood, and adds that they are able to make him wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus, inasmuch as they were profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the

man of God might be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works,—he was comparing with this case of Timothy that of those who had been brought up in heathenism, with nothing that could be called instruction in holiness, with little or no notion of what was meant by sin and repentance. These persons, when they grew up, seeing the folly of the religion of their fathers, and hearing Christ preached as one who revealed the truth concerning God, came readily over to the profession of Christianity. But they had not known Christ's forerunner, they had not been baptized with the baptism of repentance. Therefore they often turned the grace of God into lasciviousness; they caught hold of the promises of the Gospel without having ever dreaded the threats of the law; and therefore they naturally enough lowered the standard of Christian holiness, and instead of overcoming sin, were driven to that grievous state of denying sin to be sin, because they the children of God, as they boasted, had committed it; and the children of God, they said, could not sin.

Another example occurred, somewhat later, and was followed by consequences more widely mischievous. When the northern nations came down upon the Roman Empire, their kings and great men were soon persuaded to become Christians, as it was called; that is, to acknowledge Christ to be their God, and to worship Him instead of idols. In one instance we are told, that one of these chiefs became a Christian, because he ascribed a victory which he had won over his enemies to the power of Christ in his behalf, exerted in answer to a prayer which his wife had persuaded him to offer. We can see that here Christ's forerunner had been little known; that no repentance had prepared the way for the word of life; that Christ was received, not as a new principle of life into a new creature, but rather as an old principle suited to the old nature, and only presenting itself under another name. And therefore Christ's

Gospel grew mighty in word, but not in power : the new converts, as they were called, kept their old superstitions under new names, and indulged all their old passions ; and thus it came to pass that the history of modern times has in so many points exactly resembled that of ancient times ; that wars, and cruelties, and covetousness, and injustice of every kind, prevailed as much under what was in name the kingdom of Christ, as it had done in the days of heathenism.

These are the examples of history, but those of private life will come nearer to the matter. Why is it, that within our own knowledge, where all profess to believe in Christ, the work of His Spirit is yet wrought so imperfectly ? Why are not our lives and thoughts Christian, as well as our outward profession ? Is it not because with us too, in so many instances, Christ has been preached to us without His forerunner ; because we have never been prepared by repentance to receive His salvation aright ? And is not this apt to be the case where our instruction in religion is given us so often as a matter of course along with instruction in other matters, that we hear of Christ and learn to call ourselves Christians without connecting that name with any change in our own hearts and lives, or understanding any thing of the necessity of a previous preparation for it ? So with us the old nature, and the old notions, and the old practice, often remain unaltered ; and we offer the strange spectacle of persons calling themselves Christians, yet neither speaking the language, and much less adopting the practice, of that kingdom of which they profess to be members.

And this will account for the marked difference which sometimes takes place at a later period in life, when a person receives a strong religious impression. If we examine, we shall find that in such cases Christ's forerunner has done his work ; repentance has prepared the

way of the Lord, and made His paths straight. For a religious impression, I suppose, means always this, that something or other has put us in mind of God's judgment, and our danger from it has made us think of death, and how little prepared we are to meet it. The impression, in short, is one leading directly to repentance, to serious thoughts about good and evil, to a turning from the latter, and seeking the former with all earnestness; and so it puts us in a disposition to receive Christ's Gospel aright. For if we receive Christ as a Saviour from an evil which we had learned to dread and to hate,—I mean sin,—then we shall avail ourselves gladly of His aid to conquer this evil, and Christ will be truly our righteousness. But if we have not learned to dread and to hate sin, then we shall not think of going to Christ for help against it, but shall think that He will save us in our sins, instead of delivering us from them.

Again, the preparation of Christ's forerunner is needed, because we are apt, as the world goes on, to take up our notions of right and wrong from those about us; to call good what the world calls good, and evil what the world calls evil. I am not speaking now of an entire confusion between them, of calling evil good and good evil; but rather of our taking a very low standard of good, and a very high one of evil; of our thinking very much of a very little good, and very little of a very great evil. This is what is meant by the prophet Isaiah, when in describing the perfect kingdom of God he says, 'The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful;' that is to say, that very low measure of liberality and bounty which we praise as a great virtue, shall then sink to its proper level; and so, on the other hand, the sins which we treat lightly under the names of foibles or imperfections, shall then rise to their proper level, and shall be found to be the ruin of souls.

Now we cannot wonder that the Jews and heathens had got so low a standard of goodness and so much needed to be taught to repent, when the same thing has happened even in the light of the Gospel, and our common standard is notoriously so different from that given us in Christ's law. Thus the business of Christ's forerunner was to make men aware of this, to show them that their notions of good and evil wanted correction; that far less faults than they dreamed of would be their condemnation in God's judgment, that far higher virtues than those which they thought excellent were needed to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

But what shall we do then? Must we wait for Elijah to appear once more, for one like John the Baptist to arise in the spirit and power of Elijah, before the coming of the last great day of the Lord's judgment? It is no unreasonable belief that the prophecy will yet be fulfilled again; that as John the Baptist was the Elijah to prepare the way for Christ's first coming, so another Elijah may yet arise to prepare the way for His second. But whether it may be fulfilled in one individual or in more, or in any one church, or in any one people, this can be known only in its season, when God shall reveal it. Meantime we should remember that our Lord was pleased to make the baptism of water the way by which we all should be admitted into His kingdom, in order to show us that His forerunner's work is ever needed; and that as He Himself came not by water only but by water and blood, so He came not by blood only, but by blood and water; that repentance and His salvation could never be parted from each other.

So, then, the disciples of John are become the disciples of Jesus; but the disciples of Jesus still preach,—not alone certainly, yet they must preach it,—the baptism of John. Every minister of Christ is a minister of two

things, repentance and faith; and either of these without the other avails not. And as every minister of Christ is a minister of repentance and faith, so every member of Christ must keep these two things together for his own salvation. If he asks, Why is my faith so weak? is it not that his repentance has been and is deficient, that the way of the Lord is not kept duly prepared, that the ground is not cleared and levelled for the foundations of His holy temple, and that therefore it cannot be built? We should all of us think more of this: those of us whose lives man's judgment dare not do otherwise than approve, those of us who understand and admire the revelations of God in Christ Jesus, to whom reading the Scriptures, and exercises of prayer and praise, are anything but unwellcome,—even these may feel sometimes that their faith is weak, and may confess, if they examine themselves, that repentance has not its due place in their religion. I am not speaking of repentance for some great and manifest sin,—it may be that we have not committed any such,—but of repentance for the manifold faults and unworthiness of our lives, for falling so far short of God's perfect law, not in our practice merely, but even in our very principles. It is not an idle lesson which our church service teaches us, when it begins with a solemn confession of sins. It is easy to repeat this over from mere habit, without thinking of it. It may be, too, that some of its expressions may be stronger than we may think applicable to every single individual. But the thought of having left undone things which we ought to have done, and having done things which we ought not to have done, and that therefore there is in ourselves no health,—that is, that we dare not meet God's judgment as men entitled to be acquitted by it,—this is a thought which I am sure should be present to our minds whenever we come before God, and which we should earnestly labour to cherish, and

to strengthen its sincerity. For indeed, if we do look into ourselves fairly, the thought will not be affected, but most sincere. It is because we do not examine ourselves carefully to see how much is really amiss in us, that expressions of repentance seem exaggerated, and so we use them without meaning. But the more we do examine, the more we shall see ourselves as we are; and then we shall be anxious to do away with some of our many evils, to be prepared in some measure for Christ's forgiveness. Then we shall go on more steadily to follow the full leading of His Spirit, till virtues, of which now we scarcely conceive, become familiar to our minds; and it will be as sincere a matter of repentance to have failed in them, as it can now be to us to have neglected the commonest duty, or to have committed the commonest sins.

RUGBY CHAPEL:

June 19, 1836.

SERMON XV.

ZACCHÆUS.

ST. LUKE xix. 9.

This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

THESE words were spoken of Zacchæus, whose story, mentioned by St. Luke alone among the four Evangelists, was read in the second lesson for this morning's service. Although it is in its principal points in exact agreement with other passages in the Gospels, equally relating to our Lord's treatment of sinners, yet I do not know that the *whole* view of the Gospel forgiveness of sins, is anywhere more fully given than in this particular case, and it is for this reason that I wished to make it the subject of our consideration this day.

Zacchæus was a chief among the publicans, and rich. I need not say that by publicans are meant farmers of the taxes; that is to say, not simple collectors of taxes, whose business it is merely to collect from different individuals a certain sum fixed by the law, and which they, having collected it, then pay over into the hands of other officers appointed to receive it; not tax-gatherers or tax-collectors in the present sense of the word, but farmers of the taxes;—men who made it a trade or speculation, first paying to the government a certain sum, and then being

empowered to repay themselves and to make their own profit, by getting as much as they could from the people. Having thus a direct interest in the collection, they were not only watchful to exact to the utmost everything which might legally be demanded, but, as the times were bad, and the law was not always strong enough to protect the poor, they often frightened persons into paying more than was due, by the terror of bringing false or frivolous accusations against them if they did not comply with the publican's extortions. Accordingly, they became so generally odious, that they are, as we know, represented as one of the worst classes of men; so unprincipled that it was a discredit to any respectable person to mix with them in society.

A calling in such ill repute as the publican's, and abounding in so many temptations, must have been highly unfavourable to any man's virtue. If a disgraceful mark be fixed upon any business or calling in life, men of the best sort are apt to avoid this calling, and it gets filled chiefly with the worst. Again, in a way of life which is very ill spoken of, a man is likely to think a great deal of a very low degree of goodness. He is not as bad as others in his profession, and of that he makes a merit. He might thus be at once living in great sin, and in much self-satisfaction also; living worse than the generality of men in other callings, and yet proud of himself, because he was not so bad as the generality of men in his own. So exceedingly dangerous is it to have a low standard of virtue in that particular society to which we belong; as we are thus disposed not only to live wickedly, but to deceive our consciences all the time by thinking that we are better than our immediate neighbours.

With these temptations in his particular calling as a publican were united, in the case of Zacchæus, the general temptations of wealth besides. These are, to draw us

away at once from God and from our poorer brethren, and to fix our minds on our own enjoyments ; for indulgence, like other things, grows by practice and exercise. He who is rich has the means of indulging himself ; and the more he does so, the more he wishes to do it. Further than this, if public morals be low, or public opinion not able to reach the highest classes, then the indulgences procured by wealth will often be of the worst kind ; and riches will lead not only to selfishness, but to that degree of shameless wickedness which we find noticed both by sacred writers and profane about the time of the beginning of Christianity.

Thus Zacchæus was, humanly speaking, in as unfavourable a situation for turning to God, as any one could be at that time. He was one of a set of men who might emphatically be called, ‘that which was lost.’ And therefore when we find our Lord saying of this man, ‘This day is salvation come to this house ; for that he also is a son of Abraham,’ it is impossible not to perceive the freeness and fulness of the grace of the Gospel, which at once,—with no long probation of penitence or trial required,—at once forgiving all the past, and trusting for the future, declares to this lost sinner that he was one of Abraham’s children, and partaker therefore of Abraham’s blessing.

This is so true, that to deny it were to deny the very foundation of the Gospel. But yet, in giving this statement, I have not yet given the *whole* picture contained in the account of Zacchæus, and what remains is no less essential. The forgiveness was entire and immediate, because the repentance had been no less unhesitating and no less entire. ‘Zacchæus sought to see Jesus,’—we know not with how much of mere curiosity, nor with what an imperfect knowledge ; but he sought and took pains to see Him ; and He who is found by all that seek Him, said immediately,

‘Zacchæus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house.’ But when Christ was come to him, when his first imperfect desires for good had been so largely blessed, then the love of Christ constrained him, and with no reserves, with no hesitation, he gave up all his heart to Him. Zacchæus stood and said unto the Lord, ‘Behold, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.’ His repentance goes the full range of his temptations: he was rich, and had probably been self-indulgent and neglectful of his brethren; behold, now, he gives the half of all his property to the poor;—half of all his means of support and indulgence he throws from him at one blow. Again, he was a chief among the publicans, he had done as others of his calling had done; he had exacted more than the law allowed, by the terror of false informations: behold, now, if he has robbed any man in this manner, he resolves to restore him fourfold. He cares not for the sacrifice; he does not ask whether strict justice required so large a measure of restitution; much less whether the law was ever likely to enforce it; but he wishes to free himself wholly from the accursed thing, unlawful gain; he wishes to judge himself, that he be not judged of the Lord; he cannot bear that any portion of sin or sinful profit should remain in that heart and house which Christ, and Christ’s Spirit, had deigned to visit. So, then, no less complete and unreserved than the gift of the Gospel forgiveness, is the feeling and the act of Christian repentance.

Here, then, we find the Gospel in all its entireness; we see what is meant by forgiveness, and also what is meant by repentance. Let our repentance be as full, as unreserved, as immediate as that of Zacchæus, and this day, yea, this hour, is salvation come into our house, and it is proved that we also are sons of Abraham.

Indeed, the story is our own in part already ; it remains with us to see whether we will make it ours wholly. Christ has come to us, even though we sought not for Him so much as Zacchæus did, yet He says to us all, ‘To-day I must abide at thy house.’ To-day, while it is called to-day, this one short day of our earthly life, He is pleased to abide with us. He is here with all His goodness, His full forgiveness, His grace inexhaustible ; He is here amongst us to-day. Shall it be that when the morning of the next, the eternal day, arises, we shall let Him pass on His way, and shall have had Him amongst us in vain for one short space, to see us again no more for ever ?

He is come to us, and now He waits to see how we will receive Him. Perhaps it may be as He was received by the Pharisee, with cold respect, and no gratitude. We call him Lord, nay, when He tells us that He has something to say to us, we answer Him respectfully, ‘Master, say on.’ We hear His word, we listen to it, we admire it ; it is very pure, very beautiful ; never man spake like this man. We delight to have Him amongst us, to enjoy the high distinction of being a Christian nation ; not sunk in ignorance, but having the full light of truth, and able thereby to understand all knowledge. But where is our true love for Him the while, and where our consequent repentance ? We think that we need but little to be forgiven, and therefore we love little ; and because we love little, therefore also we repent little.

Or we may receive Him as Martha did. We may honour Him, admire Him, love Him, and be anxious to serve Him. We may be diligent in serving His body, the Church, diligent in promoting its worldly advantage, diligent yet more in setting forward its great work, the advance of truth and goodness. Whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, noble, pure, and true, on these we may think, and love them, and do them. And

yet it may be that we do not receive Him with the true penitence of Zacchæus, or the true love of Mary; and therefore we may miss the full pardon of the one, and the blessing of the other.

But we may receive Him also like Zacchæus, and like Mary; first like the one, and then like the other. First, like Zacchæus: Christ is come to us, but we cannot sit down with Him at the table of which He vouchsafes to be a partaker with us; we cannot be one with Him, or He with us, till we have stood and given up to Him our whole heart in true repentance. Do we ask of what we are to repent, and how we are to show it? Let us look again at Zacchæus, and consider, as he did, the sins and temptations of our general life, and those also of our particular calling. In the former respect we are for the most part as he was. We all here assembled, in comparison with the largest portion of our fellow-creatures, may well be called rich. We all must so far be like Zacchæus, that we have tasted and are tasting daily of the indulgences which riches, or if you will, which plenty, can afford us. We have all in this respect something to look to, something, I am sure, of which to repent. We may not be called upon to give the half of our goods to the poor, though neither, in fact, does it appear that he was called upon to do so. But surely there are indulgences which might be restrained, there are denials of ourselves for the sake of our poorer brethren, which if we do not make, how dwelleth the love of Christ in us?—how can we be moved to true repentance?—how obtain Christ's free forgiveness? Then again, in our particular calling, have we nothing to repent of there? no waste of time, which should be made up by a fourfold diligence? no spirit of indifference to our duty, to be made up by a fourfold zeal? Can we wonder that so few of us feel the abiding sense of Christ's forgiveness, when we know,—our hearts too surely

tell us,—that we have not probed them to the bottom? We have not opened them wholly to Christ: all their evil has not been abandoned; all their best has not been offered.

I hardly dare go on to dwell on the blessed state of those who, having once received Christ like Zacchæus, receive Him now like Mary,—those who, having truly repented, and having been fully forgiven, can now sit gratefully and joyfully at Christ's feet to hear His word. Not indeed that they sit still in the literal sense; they are not idle, nor indolent, nor inactive, but contented and peaceful. Their bodies are at work, their minds may be vigorous; but their spirits are still at Christ's feet, and nothing can draw them from their rest. Theirs is indeed the better part, who have so found Christ in this life, as to make this life appear no other than the beginning of life everlasting. But who among us have attained as yet to this state?—who may dare to look upon it without presumption, or without humiliation?

Zacchæus' state must be ours first; and woe be to us if it be not so. Christ is with us, but we are not with Him, our salvation is not come to us, unless there be first our hearty repentance: unless we are afraid to sit down with Him, to take any rest in His presence, before we have opened our hearts to Him, praying to Him to help us in opening them; that whatever of lurking evil is in them may be made as visible to our eyes as to His, and that having been made visible, it may be cast off utterly; even as He also will cast it off, and us together with it, to everlasting destruction, when the judgment which we had been afraid to pronounce upon our sins, He will pronounce for ever upon them and upon us.

SERMON XVI.

THE SECOND BIRTH.

ST. JOHN iii. 5, 6.

Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

IF we read the 15th chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, that famous chapter with which we are all so well acquainted, and which speaks at so much length of the resurrection, we shall find that there were some who called themselves Christians, and had joined the Christian society, who did not believe in any life after death. Now this to us seems a contradiction ; we cannot fancy a man's being a Christian, and at the same time his not believing in the resurrection. But what these persons meant is explained in a passage of St. Paul's second Epistle to Timothy, where he says that Hymenæus and Philetus maintained that the resurrection was past already. Of course they did not mean that either they or their disciples had been dead, and had risen again from the dead ; but they maintained that the resurrection which Christ had promised was a rising from the death of sin to the life of righteousness ; that a man so rose when he was baptized and became a Christian ; that thus to all who were Christians their resurrection was

past already ; they had received what Christ had promised, and for the future had nothing to trust to but such hopes of another life as they could gain from their own natural reason, without in any degree relying on any especial revelations of the Gospel.

Now it is true that the words ‘death’ and ‘rising again’ are often used in this figurative manner in the Scriptures, to express a man’s being sunk and lost in wickedness, and then rising out of that lost state to a life of virtue. They are so used, it is probable, in the very next chapter but one to that from which the text is taken ; namely, in the 5th chapter of St. John. In the 25th verse our Lord says, ‘the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.’ It is probable that our Lord here means exactly what His Apostle Peter means, when he says that ‘the Gospel was preached to them that are dead, that they might live according to God in the Spirit,’ and what His Apostle Paul also means, when he writes to the Ephesians, ‘Even when we were dead in sins, God hath quickened us’ (*i.e.* hath made us alive again,) ‘together with Christ, and hath raised us up together.’ You see that St. Paul himself maintains that in one sense ‘the resurrection was past already ;’ for he declares of himself and his fellow Christians, that ‘God had quickened them and had raised them up, when they were dead in sins.’ But after our Lord had spoken figuratively of the resurrection in the 25th verse of the 5th of St. John, He goes on in the 28th verse to speak of it literally. ‘Marvel not at this ;’ (*i.e.* that they who are dead in sins shall be roused by the call of the Son of God to a life of righteousness,) ‘for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of condemnation.’ His call can do more than

rouse those who are dead figuratively, sunk and lost in sins ; it shall rouse the really dead, the very dead who are in their graves, mouldering or mouldered, returning to dust or already returned to it. All of these shall hear His voice, and all shall obey it ; but it is no longer, ‘ they that hear shall live.’ It is now another resurrection, in which they who never rose before, that is, who never heard Christ’s first call from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, shall now arise only to condemnation. But truly may we say with St. John in the Revelation, ‘ Blessed and holy is he who hath part in the first resurrection ; on such the second death hath no power.’ He who has risen in this world at Christ’s first call to a life of righteousness, shall assuredly rise without fear at His second call to a life of glory.

I may seem all this time to have forgotten my text, but in truth I have been preparing the way for the explanation of it. We see that the words death and resurrection are used in the New Testament in two senses, sometimes figuratively, sometimes literally ; we see that they who used them *only* figuratively, who, like Hymenæus and Philetus, maintained that there was no other resurrection than that which was past already, erred concerning the truth, and overthrew the faith of some ; yet we see also that it were to err no less to interpret them *only* literally, for it is not true that all the really dead who shall hear the voice of the Son of God shall live eternally ; on the contrary, many shall hear it and shall obey it, but shall find it a call, not to life, but to condemnation.

Now what is true of the words ‘ death ’ and ‘ resurrection ’ is true also of the words ‘ birth ’ and ‘ kingdom of God ; ’ they also are used in two senses, a literal one and a figurative one ; and in these two, as well as in the other words, it is to err from the truth, and to lose some part of

the profitable instruction of Scripture, to take them either only literally, or only figuratively. But in the text there is a mixture of the two senses which makes it a very good opportunity for trying to explain both, as without understanding both, we cannot fully enter into its meaning.

By 'being born again,' then, is meant exactly the same thing as by 'rising again;' or rather the same two things are meant by it. In its literal sense it means what is meant by the resurrection literally,—that is, our entrance upon a new state of being, after our present one is over; by being born, we came into this world from a state of nothingness; by being born again, we shall pass into another world from a similar state of nothingness, that is, from death. This is being born again literally; and by thus being born again, we enter into the kingdom of God. Now in one sense certainly we are all in His kingdom already; we cannot go anywhere where He is not over all; we see the whole of nature around us, the very stars of heaven in their courses moving according to His laws. But here there are some things which do not obey Him, but have chosen to themselves another king; and these things are the evil hearts of men. It will then be the kingdom of God truly and perfectly, when there shall be nothing which does not obey Him, when not the earth, the moon, and the stars shall move more entirely according to His will than the hearts of all His reasonable creatures. All things that cause to offend, all things that do offend, shall be gathered out of His kingdom and cast away; there shall be nothing, no not so much as the most secret murmur of a single heart, to break the full concord of the elders' hymn, who rest not day nor night giving glory to Him who made them.

Into this kingdom of God, into this new and divine

life, we can by no natural process be born. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. By His ordinary laws God our Creator has provided our natural birth, for perishable and evil as we are, we can give life to other beings; but they must be perishable and evil likewise. But for our second birth, our birth into the kingdom of God, we require, not the natural laws of God our Maker, but the interference, in a manner different from the known laws of our present nature, of God our Sanctifier; of that most Holy Spirit who in a particular manner is the Lord and Giver of life eternal. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. By His new creation a new nature is wrought for us, incapable of decay, incapable of sin, and so fit for the eternal society of God. It is said of Christ that He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; and it is said again, that if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in us, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies, by His Spirit that dwelleth in us. Without venturing to be wise beyond what is written, we can see from these and other passages of Scripture, that God the Holy Ghost, who forms our hearts to love Him and to cleave to Him, is in a peculiar sense our Maker in our second birth, when we arise incorruptible to enter into the kingdom of God.

This is the literal sense of being born again, and of entering into the kingdom of God. But undoubtedly these terms are used in a lower and figurative sense also, like the terms death and resurrection. Properly, that is the kingdom of God where God is perfectly obeyed, where all evil is shut out utterly. But as compared with the common state of things in this life, that may well be called the kingdom of God where God is acknowledged to be King; where, if He be not perfectly obeyed, yet every act

of disobedience is self-condemned, because he who is guilty of it knows that it was against his duty, that it is his privilege to be a servant of God. And therefore the Christian church or society, where all acknowledge themselves to be God's redeemed people, and to be bound to live wholly to Him who has purchased them with the blood of His dear Son, this also is called the kingdom of God. Further,—because to belong to such a society is a great change from the principles of common men, because it is a great thing for those who have been used to live to themselves to begin to live unto God,—therefore the entrance into the Christian society on earth is called by the same name which belongs properly to our entrance into the society of just men made perfect in heaven ; it is called by no less a name than being born again.

Now the second birth in its literal sense,—our being raised up incorruptible to enter into the true kingdom of God,—is the work of God's Holy Spirit. 'That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.' And of the second birth figuratively,—that is, our being so changed in principles as to be willing to enter into what may be called the kingdom of God on earth,—it is said no less, that it is the work of the same Holy Spirit. 'Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' But of this second birth figuratively, it is said also, that a man must be born 'of water and of the Spirit;' and it is this expression, 'being born of water,' that has given occasion to many frivolous controversies and foolish superstitions. But consider the various passages in which the baptism by water is opposed to the baptism by the Holy Spirit. 'I, indeed,' says John the Baptist of himself, 'baptize you with water ; but one mightier than I cometh, who shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.' So our Lord to His disciples, after His resurrection, 'John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost

not many days hence.' Again, speaking even of Christians, it is said in the Acts of the Apostles, that Peter and John were sent down to Samaria, to give the Holy Spirit to the converts whom Philip had made; 'for as yet,' it is added, 'He was fallen upon none of them, only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus;' that is, they had received the baptism of water, but not the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Now what is meant by these two things? For it is clearly impossible that a mere outward ceremony, such as putting a person into the water, or pouring water upon him, should be spoken of in such language as is here used by our Lord. First, what is meant by the baptism by water? This John the Baptist explains, when he says, 'I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance.' The natural meaning of the ceremony of baptizing with water was the putting off the defilements of sin, the being cleansed in spirit from sin, as the body is washed by water. To be born of water then is, in other words, to be prepared for the society of Christ by a hearty repentance; to have cast off all former sins, and to be ready with a pure and single heart to receive the teaching of His Spirit. To be baptized with the Spirit, as an introduction into the Christian society, has had at some times a wider signification than at others. In the time of the first Christians it meant particularly the receiving the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, which were bestowed by the laying on of the Apostles' hands, as a sign of the great power of God. But as it does not appear that all Christians received these gifts, the baptism of the Spirit is to be looked for in another thing, which was more universal; namely, the faith in Jesus Christ, required of every man, together with his repentance, before he was admitted into the Christian Church. 'No man,' says St. Paul, 'can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost;' and it was an especial work of the Spirit to

present to the mind the things which concerned the person of Christ. So that the water and Spirit here spoken of by our Lord, so far as they relate to the entrance into the kingdom of God in its lower sense, that is, into the Christian Church on earth, seem to apply most properly to the repentance of past sins, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, required of those who are received to baptism.

But this is not the sense in which it most concerns us to dwell upon them. We have been all long since admitted into the Christian Church, and the value of that admission depends very much on the state of the church at any given time; it may do very little towards gaining us an entrance into the true kingdom of God. But into that true kingdom, that state of eternal life and joy, we must all be born by water and by the Spirit. These are they which must prepare us through what is well called our travail time of life, for the moment of our heavenly birth hereafter; without these we shall never come to it. By constant repentance, constant faith,—and not faith only, but all the other graces of the Holy Spirit, each in their order,—we are gradually ripened for our appointed hour. In this sense we may say, if we will, that we are born daily, by daily becoming more and more ready to be born; but the actual birth is at our resurrection, or else, in a lower sense, when we are admitted into the Church of Christ on earth for the first time. But as in this sense it is past with all of us, and as in that higher sense which alone concerns us, it can only come after our deaths, so there is no birth to be looked for now, as some one sudden change, which shall divide, as by a great gulf, the latter parts of our lives from those which have gone before. We cannot be born here any more, but we may by water and the Spirit be prepared for a real birth hereafter. The preparation may not cease till the time of that birth be fully

come. It is still by the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, all agreeing in one, that we are brought nearer and nearer to the redemption of our body, to the real resurrection, the real birth, into the kingdom of God—not by ‘water’ only, that is, by repentance, but by ‘water and blood,’ by our repentance and our grateful faith in God’s love through Christ; and not by these only, but by the constant indwelling of the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead; that abiding with us, and ripening in us all His blessed fruits of love, and peace, and joy, He may, when our spirits are fully quickened, quicken also our mortal bodies,—that having heard Christ’s call from the death of sin, and having arisen to His spiritual life, we may hear it also from the very grave, and come forth, and be born again to a life which shall never die.

RYDAL CHAPEL:

July 15, 1832.

SERMON XVII.

CHRIST'S MIRACLES.—THE DEMONIACS.

ST. MATTHEW viii. 31.

So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

THE second lesson for this morning's service contained these words, in the account of the cure wrought by our Lord on the two men possessed with devils, on the shore of the lake of Gennesaret. Few parts of the New Testament have been the subject of greater difference of opinion than those which relate to the cases of men possessed with devils; and in addition to the general difficulties of this question, there are others peculiar to the particular story to which the text belongs. Now the difficult parts of the New Testament require to be touched upon occasionally, or at least once for all, in order to remove that perplexity which might otherwise beset men's minds in reading them. When I speak of removing perplexity, I by no means use the expression as equivalent to removing the difficulties of this and other similar passages; for a part of the Scripture may be exceedingly *difficult*, and yet may occasion us no *perplexity* at all. I mean by *perplexity*, that state of mind in which we do not know clearly how much can be understood of a part of Scripture, and how much cannot; a state in which we do not know what to do with a passage, what lesson we ought to learn from it, and how far we must be contented to pass it over as a thing sealed beyond

our opening. This is a painful state, and an unedifying one; whereas the being conscious of a difficulty which we cannot explain, is not, or ought not to be, either the one or the other. Before a confessed and palpable unconquerable difficulty, the mind, if in a healthy state, reposes as quietly as when in possession of a discovered truth; as quietly and contentedly as we are accustomed to bear that law of our nature which denies us the power of seeing through all space, or of being exempt from sickness and decay. And thus the clear consciousness of the necessity of ignorance in any given matter has a tranquillising effect upon us, and allows us to turn ourselves wholly, and with no fond looking back of hope or regret, to those matters which we are equally conscious may be rendered intelligible to our minds, and therefore in some way or other improving to them.

Our *perplexity*, then, may be removed as to the parts of Scripture which relate to men possessed with devils, although we may be quite unable to remove the difficulties of the subject. The difficulty consists in this, that of spiritual beings, as we call them, we can have no distinct conceptions. What a spirit is, and how it acts, are questions to which we can give no answers. And therefore when we hear of a man possessed with a spirit, all that we can understand or judge of in the matter is limited to the effects of such possession, whether for good or for evil. When we hear of one possessed by the Spirit of God, we can in no way understand the manner of the Spirit's working, far less perceive it with our bodily senses; but we can see and understand its fruits, and from them judge of the power that wrought them. And so with one possessed by a spirit of evil; nothing is visible, nothing is intelligible to us in the process of its working, save only the evil fruits produced by it,—evil whether as relates to the body or the mind; for in both, as God is confessedly the author of

all good, though working in some measure by secondary and intelligible causes, so it is no less conceivable that evil spirits may be the authors of all evil, though *their* working, too, may be through the instrumentality of such physical and moral causes as we can recognise, understand, and, with God's help, obviate.

This being so, there appears to me in those narratives of the New Testament which speak of the casting out of devils, to be no more than a lifting up the veil which is commonly drawn between first and secondary causes, and giving us a momentary glimpse of that opposition between the very authors of good and evil, which we ordinarily can only witness in their respective instruments. For had we stood by our Lord's side when He was casting out the devils by the lake of Gennesaret, what is it that we should actually have seen? On the one hand, a man, in all visible respects such as ourselves, speaking, walking, breathing, like other men, turning with looks full of power and goodness towards those who were rushing to meet him. In them, on the other hand, what should we have seen but two persons, equally, in all visible respects, merely men,—persons exhibiting all the outward symptoms of violent madness in their conduct, in their gestures, in their words. Had we heard them say to Jesus, 'If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine,' what do we suppose there would have been in the tone or import of the words more than those of common madness; and should we not have imagined that the madman spoke under the influence of his disorder, and identified himself with a spirit whom he believed to be within him? Or again, a few minutes afterwards, what should we have seen more than two madmen wonderfully recovered from their disorder, conscious now of themselves, and of their true condition, while at some distance from them a herd of swine seemed suddenly seized with an unaccountable fury,

and were all rushing down the cliff into the lake, and there perishing? Should we not, while wondering at the strangeness of the occurrence, have accounted for it, supposing us to have possessed our present notions, by ascribing it to some extraordinary influence of the season, or to some plant which the swine had accidentally eaten? Should we, in short, have seen anything more of spiritual agency in the matter than we can see now in those cases of madness which occur commonly, indeed, but still unaccountably, in dogs and other domestic animals?

This is a faithful account of all that we should have seen, had we ourselves been eye-witnesses to the miracle. Yet in that good man, endowed with such mighty power, there dwelt, we know, amidst all the perfection of the human nature, the fulness of the Godhead also; and in those madmen, with all the symptoms of what we call common and natural madness, the Scripture has revealed to us that there dwelt an author of that madness, of whom without such revelation we could have known nothing. That this was so,—that a more than natural or human power of good and of evil was working in the transaction, the mere circumstances of the case might have induced us readily to believe. Divine power was surely there, when a single word dispelled in a moment, in the case of two separate persons, a violent access of madness, and restored them at once to their perfect senses; and some evil power, setting in motion, as it were, the physical causes of madness, might well have been supposed to be present, when the words of the seeming madmen, asking to be allowed to visit the swine, were so instantly answered by the event; and while they who in all appearance had spoken them were sitting quietly at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in their right mind, the spirit of madness had gone from them into the swine, according to its word; and as before, was manifesting its presence and its power only by effects in themselves apparently natural.

But the question is asked, Why have evil spirits ceased to possess men now, if they really possessed them in the time when our Lord was on earth? It has been answered, that with so great an interposition for good as was then shown, when God became manifest upon earth in the person of Christ, an unusual interposition of the powers of evil is conceivable also; devised by them for their own cause, permitted by God for His own glory. This answer would indeed be of much weight, if we were obliged to allow the fact which the question takes for granted. But how can we be sure that evil spirits have ceased to possess men now? The effects of evil are sufficiently visible now as in the times of our Lord; the spiritual authors of that evil were not more visible then, nor without His interposition and His revelation would they have been more known to us then, than they are at this moment. God and God's Spirit still work continually for our good; not less certainly because the working is invisible, and its effects seemingly natural. How can we be sure that evil spirits are not at work as continually, with an agency as real, with a power as untraceable, with results as seemingly natural? All the difference is, that—having no longer that gift of the spirit of power which could attack evil in a manner at its source, and destroy the effects by a direct removal of the cause,—we are now compelled to combat evil in its effects only, to meet secondary causes by secondary; to imitate, in short, those ordinary workings of God's providence which we call natural causes, instead of those more direct manifestations of Himself which we call miraculous and divine.

There is another question sometimes asked with regard to one particular part of the story; namely, why the evil spirits were permitted to enter into the swine? I say permitted, for it is a manifest mistake to suppose that they were sent by our Lord into the swine, as His act, and not theirs. But the only answer to this question is

another: Why are evil spirits, or why is evil permitted to work at all? Why are they not all shut up at once in the abyss or deep, to use the language of the Jews: hindered, that is, from going to and fro in the earth, to the injury of our bodies and our souls? And this is one of those questions before which, as I said, a sound mind may repose as quietly as in the possession of discovered truth; for it is a question which never has been answered on earth, and never can be; the gates of Paradise must be entered before the answer to it can be given us. Here there is no perplexity, but a confessed unconquerable difficulty, which, to assail in the hope of overcoming it, is madness. Let us rest contentedly before it, acknowledging this fact, and dismissing for ever the restless hauntings which might tempt us to an enquiry so fruitless.

But yet, amidst the inscrutable darkness of that principle of the permission of evil which is declared to us in all nature, and with neither more nor less of obscurity in our Lord's permission to the evil spirits in the text,—there is still that in their request and in His answer, which is full of warning to us all. Have we cast out any evil spirit from our own hearts, or the hearts of others? Let us be sure that the evil so expelled goes not out into the abyss; it is not so much taken for ever from the dominion of our great enemy; the evil is permitted till the great day of the restoration still to wander about in search of prey, sometimes to return to the place whence it was cast out, sometimes to fix its hold on some new victim. 'Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come:'—the work will not have been fully wrought; there will be left enough of those over whom the spirit of evil is exercising dominion, from how many hearts soever that spirit may have been driven. Not yet, then, may the disciples whom their Lord has sent out to combat the enemy, turn back in

triumph as though the work were done ; not yet may they enter into their rest, nor lie down secure for themselves or for their brethren. Still ascends the cry of the evil spirits, ‘Suffer us to enter into this new victim ;’ still they do enter in and dwell ; and those in whom they dwell run greedily to their own destruction, and perish in the overwhelming waters.

And with regard to the whole account of these men who were possessed with evil spirits and whom Christ delivered from their power, thus much may be at least allowed, even if we refuse to allow that any similar cases of possession occur now. The belief in the existence and active efforts of spirits of evil, is surely capable of much practical usefulness, and has no natural tendency to lead to superstition. Its practical use is to excite us to watchfulness ; there are more things against us than our own natural weakness and tendencies to evil ; there is a spirit who hates us, who, restless in his efforts against us, will aggravate every bad tendency in us, and who gives us more than passive resistance to contend with. But, unless we go beyond our knowledge, there is in this no room for superstition : the enemy acts only through our own hearts, and through them alone can we resist him. By no superstitious follies can he be repelled, who assaults us only by means which we call natural. And on that ground are we to meet him. If evil thoughts and desires arise continually within us, it is by prayer, and faith, and watchfulness, that they must be repelled. The Spirit of God helps us as surely as the spirit of evil threatens us ; but our part in following the one and resisting the other, is in all soberness and reason, with godly fear and godly love, not with fanatical confidence or superstitious fear.

RUGBY CHAPEL,

May 10th, 1835.

SERMON XVIII.

CHRIST'S PARABLES.—THE GROWING SEED.

ST. MARK iv. 28, 29.

For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately they put in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

THE short parable from which these two verses are taken is very remarkable. It is to be found only in St. Mark's Gospel, although his account, generally speaking, is very much confined to the miracles of our Lord, and gives fewer of His parables and discourses. And it is one of those parables which in the general view which they give of human life and character are so peculiar to our Lord. It speaks literally of the kingdom of God, that is, of the state of Christians considered together as a body; but it describes no less truly the state of individual Christians, and it is in this point of view that I am proposing now to consider it.

It begins, 'So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.' Now the seed cast into the ground is undoubtedly to be understood of the knowledge of good which may be at any time laid before the mind of another. We have an opportunity, it may be, of doing this; a

person is with us for a certain time, and then perhaps is removed from us ; we must even leave the seed to itself and go on our way, trusting that God in His good providence will preserve it, and make it spring up in its season. It does spring up, and the plant begins to grow, very small at first, then larger, then showing signs of coming into ear, then coming into ear, and lastly ripening. We may be impatient for its appearing sooner, but it waits its own time ; we may wish to forward its growth, but we can do nothing for it ; it comes on and ripens in its season ; and when it is ripe, then they put in the sickle, because the harvest is come. Then we are repaid, and much more than repaid, for any labour which we may in the beginning have bestowed on it. Its fruit speaks for itself, and we see and taste its benefits.

Still however it may be asked, what is the lesson which we are to learn from this ; for it is not the custom of our Lord merely to state a thing as a matter of fact actually occurring in life, unless there may be something derived from it practically useful. And we cannot suppose that He means to advise us to be careless, to take no pains of our own, but to leave the event wholly to God ; to sleep and rise night and day without taking any thought for the welfare of those whom we wish to benefit ; in the hope that God will be watching for us though we may be asleep, and that He will bring forward and ripen the fruit which we have neglected.

Undoubtedly it does not mean this ; for how does our Lord represent Himself?—as the gardener digging about and dressing the barren fig-tree, in the hope that it might perhaps at last bring forth fruit. He did not leave it to itself, saying that God would take care of it, and either cure it in His own time or destroy it ; but He laboured upon it that its nature might be altered, and that so God might not destroy it. And what Christ teaches us in one

parable will never contradict what He teaches us in another.

Yet the two parables teach us different lessons, each making that of the other complete. We should do all that we can do, and then leave the event to God with confidence. To provide for the future by any present act is wise and good; but to be anxious about the future, where no act of ours can affect it, is a weakness and a want of faith. The parable of the fig-tree teaches us the duty of the first, the parable of the growth of the corn while men slept, teaches us the foolishness of the second.

But together with a vain anxiety, the parable also condemns a vain impatience. 'The earth brought forth, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.' Each in its own order, but not all at once, and still less the last first. What we should look for in the spring is promise, in the summer and autumn, it is performance. What should disappoint us is to find these wanting; it were a strange folly that should seek in summer for the fresh leaves and delicate flowers of spring, or in spring should require the deep foliage and abundant fruits of summer.

Now why does all this fit particularly the present occasion? Or is it merely the explanation of a part of the Scripture which may be given on one day as well as on another? It does suit the present time, I think, particularly. For unreasonable expectations are sure to be followed by disappointment no less unreasonable. If from confirmation, from this day's communion, from our serious thoughts and earnest prayers, we expect too large or too early a return, we shall surely be disappointed, and apt to think, because we found not the good which we looked for, that therefore the ordinances, the prayers, and the resolutions were all in vain. Then follows a greater and more desperate carelessness, because we think that care has done no good already.

And we may, still retaining our former error, long for the chance of some sudden and almost extraordinary conversion, as if that at least would at once bring the fruit which we desire. For still, as before, we wish to strike off if possible the season of spring and gradual growth; we would fain see the corn ripen the instant that the seed is thrown into the ground.

A third parable may here be called in to make the whole image yet clearer. We must be patient when the seed is sown; such is the lesson of the text: yet we must not be careless, nor neglect our duty to the ground in which it is to spring up; so teaches the parable of the fig-tree: and to learn what that ground may be, and what are the dangers which most threaten the increase of the plant, and against which our care should be most directed, we should attend to the lesson of the parable of the sower.

As a mere delight to the understanding, I know of none greater than thus bringing together the different and scattered jewels of God's word, and arranging them in one perfect group. For whatever is the pleasure of contemplating wisdom absolutely inexhaustible, employed on no abstract matter of science, but on our very own nature, opening the secrets of our hearts, and disclosing the whole plan of our course in life,—the highest wisdom clothed in a garb of most surpassing beauty;—such is the pleasure to the mere understanding of searching into the words of Christ, and blending them into the image of His perfect will respecting us.

But if this be all, we shall surely search into them in vain. Let us apply them then to ourselves, not for our delight only, but for our benefit. And first of all, those who were confirmed yesterday, and those who have received the communion to-day, have, I doubt not, made many serious resolutions; or at any rate all were more or less moved to something better than their usual temper, and

prayed and wished sincerely to be good. But consider that the week which is now begun is likely to lead to other thoughts; pleasure of another sort, the return to your homes, and all the enjoyments which that return brings with it, are likely to fill your hearts between this time and the period when you will actually depart. So that directly after the effect produced by the services of yesterday and to-day, there will come in something to lessen it. Now if you had expected any immediate change to take place in your minds, so that your thoughts would have been more fixed on God, and your enjoyment of earthly things less lively, you will in all probability be disappointed. Then if you feel that you have fallen back so soon after so solemn a service, you may think what hope there can be for the time to come that it may not be the same again; you may consider it of no use to make up as it were the accounts of your souls, if they are so soon again to fall into confusion.

But what is the truth? The seed, I earnestly hope, has been sown in your hearts, which may hereafter bring forth fruit unto life eternal. And what is the nature of the different soils on which it has been sown? This you can each tell for yourselves; that is, you can tell what your faults are most likely to arise from; whether from thoughtlessness, or from some strong passion which masters you, and leads you to care for nothing but itself. These two characters are represented in the parable of the sower, by the stony ground, and that overgrown with weeds. It is clear that in the majority of persons—of young persons at any rate—the danger is of the former kind; it is not that with strong desires and powers for good, the desire for evil is yet stronger; but that in the light soil nothing will grow vigorously, except such plants as require no depth of earth,—ordinary follies and selfishnesses, with no great crimes and no great virtues. This is the disadvantage

which the seed sown has most commonly to struggle with. It is hard to give it root, and therefore the first temptations are apt to pluck it away. Here, then, the work required is to give depth to the soil, to make the character more decided, to encourage the growth of kindly affections, of generous and ennobling pursuits, although they may not be by any means the highest of all, nor that with which we are to sit down contented at last. But the earth will bring forth first the blade, then the ear, and last of all the full corn in the ear. We must rejoice at first to see the blade, although, if it is never followed by the ear, the seed certainly will have been sown in vain.

For instance, whilst the pleasures of going home are so pressing on your minds, I would not say, ‘Strive to shut out your love of such things: they, like all earthly things, are vanity; God alone endures for ever:’ but I would say, ‘It is a great happiness which you are going to enjoy, and thank God for it. But consider whether the pleasure with which your return is looked forward to at home is not somewhat purer than yours. Your relations look forward to welcoming you, not that it will bring to them any relief from unpleasant work, any greater liberty, or greater indulgence; but because they are glad to see you for your own sake, because they love you. Dwell upon this thought, and let it urge you to return their love worthily. Encourage your family affections; in the manifold chances of life you may be soon separated; make the most of the time while you are yet together. Draw closer your friendship with your brothers and with your sisters, and avail yourselves of your increased age since you were last at home, to increase the confidence and openness of your intercourse with your parents. Return here, not confirmed in selfishness and coarseness by six weeks’ indulgence, but with a spirit at once more manly and more affectionate, and therefore braced, not weakened, for the work which

will again be set before you. If you go home with such resolutions, and begin to perform them when you arrive there, be sure that the thought of God will be no burden to you; you will remember this day and yesterday with no painful shame. Thank God for His goodness to you, and so learn to love Him better and better. You will be then more ready to do every duty which you have to do: pure happiness, such happiness as dwells in an open and a loving breast, is a wonderful excitement to labour in very thankfulness, that we may please those whom we love, and who have made us so happy, whether it be our earthly friends or our heavenly one. Your whole character will then have been strengthened and raised, and so there will be more depth of soil in which the heavenly seed may hereafter ripen. The work will be going on, silently and surely; there will be the beautiful and healthy promise of a plentiful harvest.'

If, again, there be any whose minds are of a different quality, whose characters are formed beyond their years, in whom the love of knowledge or the love of distinction is already a strong passion, for them the approaching return to their friends offers no less the peculiar benefit which they need. The soil with them is deep enough, and its produce will be vigorous: may God grant that it be the fruit of the tree of life, and not merely of the tree of knowledge. But here, too, home has an influence softening and sweetening, as for the weaker mind it was strengthening and elevating. Most heartily do I pity him who feels the common intercourse of affectionate hearts wearisome, and is always longing for some intellectual stimulus. Most heartily do I pity him who is insensible to the happiness of a well-spent Sunday in the midst of his family. For him who is too ambitious, whose intellect is growing unnaturally, and fast overbalancing his love both of God and man, it is no wisdom to carry on

the same fevering process at home, to think time lost when it is not spent in advancing his idol. For him the most familiar and simple pleasure will have a healthful tendency, by reducing the overweening growth of that plant which is fast becoming a deadly poison.

If there are those also amongst us whose hearts may be likened to the good ground of the parable, not too shallow for good, not overgrown with any luxuriant weed, for them little needs be said, save to bid them thank God with the deepest humility. But let them, too, not expect the fruit immediately, nor deform their character by any unnatural putting on of the manners and habits which do not become their years. Let them increase evermore in their love of God; but let them remember also that God wills them to improve all the talents which He has given them, and that they can glorify Him best by discharging in a Christian spirit the particular duties to which He has called them.

I know that some would say that I have been dwelling only on weak and beggarly elements; that I should have better followed up the service of yesterday and to-day by calling on you to stir up the grace of God that has been given you, and to hold fast to your Saviour's cross. But indeed I have been doing so: else it were most true that my preaching were worse than vain. I have called on you to stir up the grace of God that has been given you, by forming such resolutions for the coming holidays as may help you to love God best, and to look back on these days with least regret. I have urged you to hold fast to your Saviour's cross: for I have urged you to look into your own minds, and see what are your prevailing faults, and against those favourite faults to struggle most vigorously, rooting out selfishness by love, and pride by peacefulness and humility. And if the love I have spoken of, namely, the love of earthly friends, be but a weak and beggarly

element, yet who has ever attained to the heights of knowledge by despising the first simple elements which lead to them? They deserve only the reproachful name of poor and beggarly if we rest contented in them, and seek to go no farther; not if we use them in their proper season to help us to that which we could not reach without them.

Deeply indeed should I grieve if I had awakened thoughts in any one's mind which, in any proper sense of the term, were low and worldly. I might, indeed, have produced a stronger excitement by using a different language; but would that excitement have maintained its ground against the different excitement which is now coming upon you? The soberer feeling is, I think, the more likely to be lasting; the letting your thoughts glide gently from the most solemn things to the things of the world, keeping with them that which will sanctify the worldly pleasure, and make it in its turn to forward Christ's work. May God bless you, bless you in your serious thoughts, bless you in your happiness; and make you to know and feel that, whether serious or cheerful, He is your loving Father and eternal Friend, through His Son Jesus Christ.

RUGBY CHAPEL,
June 30th, 1833.

SERMON XIX.

DEATH AND SALVATION.

ST. MARK xiv. 21.

Good were it for that man if he had never been born.

WHEN we consider by whom these words were spoken, and when also we think steadily of what is contained in them, they are I think, altogether, one of the most solemn passages to be found in the whole of the Scriptures. They were spoken by Him who so loved us that He gave His own life for us, by Him who spoke of what He knew, to whom all things were open, the things of death, no less than the things of life. They were spoken also when He was just going to lay down his life for us, when His love towards God and man was most perfectly displaying itself. Yet the words spoken by one so full of love and so full of all knowledge, the words spoken by Him who was truth itself, and at the moment when He was most showing His love, these words express the most fearful amount of misery which the human mind can possibly conceive. For they declare of an immortal being, that it would have been good for him if he had never been born. Now consider what immortality is, consider what is conveyed to us in the words 'never ending;' and it will be plain that if it were good for a man that his never ending being should never have been begun, it can only be because it will be to him a

being of never ending misery. For let the misery last ever so long, yet if it has any end at all, the eternity of happy existence which follows that end must make it not bad, but infinitely good for us to have been born. Thousands on thousands of years of suffering, if that suffering is to end at last, must be infinitely less to an immortal being, infinitely more vain, infinitely more like a dream at waking, than one single second of suffering compared to threescore and ten years of perfect happiness.

There was one for whom it would have been good if he had never been born. But if this were all, if it were no more than a particular truth relating to one particular man, better a great deal that we should turn away our minds from a subject so dreadful, rather than fix them on it; for why should we pain ourselves, why injure the calm tone of our feelings, by presenting to them images of gratuitous horror? What I have said already would have been far too much, if this were so. But if it be no particular truth, but a general one; if there have been many of whom it might have been said no less truly that it were good for them if they had never been born: when, above all, it will be truly said of our very selves,—of us, now sitting here,—of us, most of us so young and so happy,—of us, so full of hope and of enjoyment,—when I say it will be true of every one of us, that it were good for us if we had never been born, unless we cross over from death unto life, and so strive, and so watch, and so pray, as many of us now perhaps can hardly fancy themselves doing,—then it is no useless horror, no unnecessary exciting the feelings, but a work rather of soberness and truth and loving-kindness, to open the eyes of any on that gulf of infinite darkness into which he of whom Christ spake once fell; on whose edge, unconscious of our danger, we ourselves in many cases are now standing.

There is no occasion to dwell on the particular sin of

him of whom the words in the text were spoken; for we know that except we repent we shall all likewise perish. Otherwise we might remember that they who sin against their Saviour are expressly said to crucify Him afresh; their guilt being thus made directly of the same sort as well as degree with his of whom Christ said that it had been good for him if he had never been born. It is not the particular sin, however, with which we are concerned, but rather the general state on which this fearful doom was pronounced. It was the state of one who with many opportunities long offered to him, had neglected all; who had brought himself to that condition that he might despair, but could not repent. Now if this condition were wholly ours, then it were vain to speak of it; if we had so long and so obstinately hardened our hearts that there was no place left for repentance, then indeed we might sit down and cross our arms as helplessly as the boatman when he feels himself within the sure indraught of the cataract, and that no human aid can save him from being swept down the fearful gulf. But if the boat be not so surely within the grasp of the current; if yet, though it be fast hurrying downwards, it may by a vehement effort be rescued, if the shore of certain safety be not only near, but by possibility accessible,—who cannot conceive the energy with which we should struggle under such circumstances? who cannot feel of what intense efforts he would then be capable, when on the issue of a few moments of greater or less exertion, life or death were hanging?

The words of the Scripture which I have been dwelling on, are known to the ears of us all; they stand ever before us, with a truth no less awful at one moment than at another. Yet we are so formed, that truths, at all times equally important in themselves, present themselves to our minds under some circumstances with greater force than

others. It seemed to open to me the full force, the full magnitude of the truth of our Lord's words, when I heard them read this morning. For when should the importance of every moment of trial be more felt, than when we witness cases of trial ended? When should we all feel more deeply what we have to do here, the infinite evil of neglect, the infinite blessing of Christian exertion, than now at this moment, when so many who have been long amongst us have just been removed from us,—when for all of these one scene of trial has passed for ever, improved or wasted; when to one of this very number not this scene of early trial only, but the time of all trial is gone, and even at the very moment when his companions are removed to another field of labour, he has been taken to his eternal rest?

And then how flashes upon the mind along with the awful truth of Christ's words to Judas, the accompanying truth as blessed as that is awful,—how good it is, good beyond the power of tongue to speak of, for Christ's redeemed to have been born! How bright a light is thrown upon this earthly life when we so look at it! How good is it for us to be here! How thankfully, how joyfully, may we feel the consciousness that we are alive, if having joined ourselves to Christ, and, walking in His faith and fear, we know that this life shall be for ever!

So then on both sides the importance of our time here, of every day of it and of every hour, is brought out, not with exaggeration, but simply without disguise or concealment, when we are looking as now upon trial ended. We judge of things then as God judges of them; for an instant our view of earth and earthly things is like His. For when I came yesterday from witnessing all but the very death-bed of him who has been taken from us, and looked around upon all the familiar objects and scenes within our own ground, where your common amusements were going

on with your common cheerfulness and activity, I felt that there was nothing painful in witnessing that; it did not seem in any way shocking or out of tune with those feelings which the sight of a dying Christian must be supposed to awaken. The unsuitableness in point of mere natural feeling between scenes of mourning and scenes of liveliness, did not at all present itself. But I did feel, that if at that moment any of those faults had been brought before me which sometimes occur amongst you; had I heard that any of you had been just guilty of falsehood, or of drunkenness, or of any other such sin; had I heard from any quarter the language of profaneness, or of unkindness, or of indecency; had I seen or heard of any signs of that wretched folly which courts the laugh of fools by affecting not to dread evil and not to care for good;—then the unsuitableness of any of these things with the scene I had just quitted would indeed have been most intensely painful. And why? Not because such things would really have been worse then than at any other time, but because at such a moment the eyes are opened really to know good and evil; because we then feel what it is so to live as that death becomes an infinite blessing, and what it is also so to live, that it were good for us if we had never been born.

Thus when feeling strongly what it is to have our trial happily over, we turn with something of a fit interest to the trial which is still going on. From regarding those for whom our hope had even grown into confidence, we turn to those for whom anxiety is almost becoming fear. We look around upon some whose characters are manifestly undecided, upon others who we may fear seem, although not yet bad, to be yet less promising for good than they once were; upon others, again, who though looking upwards, seem still as it were on the edge of danger; upon others, lastly, for whom hope is lively, yet still we know

how often hope is blighted. We look around on such a scene, just fully impressed with the full importance of its tendencies both for good and for evil, and earnestly disposed,—who could be otherwise?—to assist with God's help in turning the scale for good. But then there comes upon the mind also with no less force the conviction that no man can deliver his brother. With all the desire in the world to help in such a cause, we cannot but feel that there is no help in us. The work of turning souls is God's only; and your own, each for himself, is in not resisting the workings of His Spirit for your good.

Yet, feeling this most entirely, we would still pray you as in Christ's stead that ye be reconciled to God. We cannot but feel sure that many must need so to be reconciled; those at any rate, if there were no others, who have not yet begun to think of God, but who for many a year have been old enough to offend Him; those who have only the thoughtlessness of childhood left, but who have long lost its innocency. To them in particular the call is addressed, 'Be ye reconciled to God:' to them belongs the warning, 'Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.' How marked even to human eyes is in most instances the change from thoughtlessness to God. Not marked by changes of manner, or by adopting a peculiar and unnatural language: but by a manifest sincerity of purpose, by a plain desire to do what is right, by keeping aloof from the evil and the foolish, or—as this cannot always be in such a society as ours,—by not joining in their evil or their folly, by having better things to love and care for, and by not being ashamed to show that it is so. He who shows such a change in him we may well believe to be reconciled to God: not that such works in themselves, or any works that he can do, are able by their own merit to reconcile him, nor does he for a moment believe that they are; but because, as it is our sin and care-

lessness that keep us away from Christ, so, where we see a manifest disposition to avoid sin, there we may be sure that Christ's Spirit has worked, and that Christ's redemption has been thankfully received.

And now then may I not well call on all who hear me to be reconciled to God?—on all who have any influence, from whatever cause derived, that they being converted may strengthen their brethren, and not, while they perish themselves, incur also the dreadful guilt of leading others to perish also ;—on all who are ripening in age, and on all who are not yet ripening ; for neither can afford to linger on their way, and both, if they delay, are as yet in that state in which it would have been good for them if they had never been born ;—on all who, being possessed of some ability, are either wasting it in absolute idleness, or disposed to exert it for the sake of their own distinction and credit, exercising their understandings while their hearts are neglected ; — on all who being deficient in ability have little or no interest in the peculiar business of this place, but who have therefore the more reason to take heed lest while they give up earthly prizes with indifference, they should give up the pursuit of eternal life besides ;—on all, in short, of whatever character, of whatever powers,—lest it should be said of you that it were good if you had never been born ; when to the poorest understanding, to the humblest in age and influence amongst us, every hour of life may be made so precious, that to have been born shall be an eternal and infinite blessing?

RUGBY CHAPEL :

October 11, 1835.

SERMON XX.

CHRIST'S DIVINITY

EXODUS iii. 14.

And God said unto Moses, I am that I am.

ST. JOHN viii. 58.

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

RESEMBLANCES in words merely between one part of Scripture and another, and especially when those words are looked at by themselves without any reference to the context, cannot be insisted upon as proving any thing. But when the passage in St. John from which I was just quoting was chosen for the Gospel of this day, the chapter in Exodus from which I have been also quoting, having been chosen for the first lesson, the resemblance between them to which it was intended to draw our attention was not verbal only but real. Verbal indeed it is not, as far as the Greek version of the Old Testament is concerned ; for the expression there which answers to the ‘I am that I am’ of our English Bible, is not the same with that in St. John’s Gospel, which is translated in English by the same words. But the resemblance is real notwithstanding ; for He who redeemed His people out of Egypt, and whilst revealing Himself in a visible form described Himself as essentially and eternally existing, is the same

with Him who redeemed His people from their sins, and who, whilst again revealing Himself in a visible form, again declared that His existence was not measured by time, that He was the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Those who are acquainted with controversial theology well know that the words of our Lord are made to bear a lower sense by those who do not acknowledge His Divinity. By them they are interpreted as meaning only, 'Before Abraham was, it was determined in the counsels of God that I should be, and as to God all things are eternally present, so I may say that in God's sight before Abraham was, I am.' Many persons who would without any scruple reject such an interpretation in this case, yet do not hesitate often, in explaining the prophecies, to adopt a similar rule of interpretation there; that is, they give the words a meaning as far below their simple and obvious meaning, as the interpretation, 'Before Abraham was, I was present to God, inasmuch as he had determined that I should be,' falls below the simple meaning of the words 'Before Abraham was, I am.' But the fault in both cases consists not in giving such partial interpretations of the words of Scripture as *a* meaning of them, but as *the* meaning; as their highest meaning or their only one. It is true that our Lord's incarnation was determined, so the Scripture tells us, from the beginning of the world; it is true, therefore, that our Lord was present in the mind of God, if we may so speak, before Abraham was born; and if any Jew who had heard Him say these words and who knew nothing of His divine nature, had understood them in this sense, and therefore, seeing in them nothing which he would think blasphemous, had not joined his countrymen in taking up stones to cast at Him, such a Jew would have understood them well according to his light, and would have gained from them the knowledge of a truth.

And so when the Apostles preached the resurrection, they were not wrong who said that the rising from the death of sin to a life of righteousness, was a part of the Christian's resurrection. But those were very wrong, who said that this figurative and partial interpretation of the doctrine expressed the whole of it. And so should we be wrong, if, taking only the lowest sense which our Lord's words will bear, that sense of which they are a highly hyperbolical expression, we were to say that this is all which they contain ; that he who has learnt without offence to embrace them fully, to take them in their length and in their breadth, in that sense in which they are no longer hyperbolical but literal, has extracted from them more than they were intended to supply.

And thus with respect to the interpretation of prophecy. We do often very right in taking a lower or partial sense ; it is that sense which according to the particular view before us may happen to be the true one. For instance, in taking the prophecies in the simple and historical view of them, as relating, for example, to Babylon or to Jerusalem literally, we should then do wrong if we were not to understand them in a sense much lower than the literal one ; everlasting destruction, perfect happiness and perfect glory, belong neither to the one city nor to the other. But then it would not be right to say that this lower meaning is all that the words bear ; there is a spiritual Babylon, there is a spiritual Israel, to which the strongest expressions of misery and happiness apply without any hyperbole ; nor is it till we have ascended to these, that we can be said to have entered fully into the mind of the prophecy. So again, many persons in the Old Testament are commonly said to be types of Christ ; there are points in which they resemble Him ; and language is often used concerning them, which as understood of them, is hyperbolical and hyperbolical only ; but which when understood

of Christ Himself, becomes literally true. For Christ being both God and man, language suitable to those human and imperfect types of Him may be applied to Him without blasphemy; while on the other hand language which as applied to them is extreme hyperbole, finds in Him, I do not say its entire, but much more than its entire fulfilment; for what human language can adequately express the perfections of the Eternal God?

The rule then is, that in all that is said in Scripture of our Lord, or of any type of Him, the full and highest meaning of the words is true of Him without hyperbole, although lower and partial meanings may very often be true also. For instance, when He said to the Jews that He and His Father were one, there was a lower sense in which this was true of Him even as a prophet; and thus our Lord actually appeals to the Scriptures, to show that similar high expressions had been there used to those who had received God's word, and declared it again to man. But it would be very wrong to rest in this lower sense of the words only; take them in their literal sense,—follow them to a height where they become lost to man's conceptions,—in the utmost, and much more than the utmost human conception of unity, it is true that Christ and the Father are one.

That St. John so understood the expressions which he has recorded of our Lord, is absolutely certain. 'Before Abraham was, I am,' is an expression which is true to the letter of Him who was in the beginning, who was with God, and was God. The first chapter of St. John's Gospel is a clear declaration that all the language which he records as applied to our Lord is to be taken in its literal sense; that it is not, like similar language when applied to persons merely human, the language of figure and hyperbole. That first chapter is the key to all that follows; it tells us that St. John, now that the Spirit had taught him to understand

Christ's words fully, acknowledged much more in them than he had found perhaps when he actually heard them : that he has recorded them for after ages, that they also might receive them to the utmost, that they also might join with the Apostle Thomas in owning Jesus of Nazareth to be their Lord and their God.

Thus much I have said as to the interpretation of the solemn words of our Lord, which I have taken as a part of my text. I have tried to show that they are to be taken in their full literal meaning, according to a rule which applies to the whole of the Scripture,—that whatever is said of Christ, or of any type of Him, may and ought to be taken as relates to Him in the full extent of its meaning ; that while the prophets and kings of Israel were often types of Him, and therefore that for His sake language was used towards them which their human nature, inasmuch as it was human only, could not worthily fulfil,—He Himself is the fulfilment of all prophecy, and no word or thought of man can conceive of Him beyond or in any degree approaching to the truth. Men could be types of Him, because He was also man ; they could be no more than types of Him, because He is God. And I have shown from the first chapter of St. John's Gospel, that the Evangelist himself clearly so understood the language which he has recorded ; it being evident, that no expressions can be too high for Him whom he has described at the very outset of his Gospel as existing in the beginning, as being with God, and being God, and as being the Maker of all things.

But I have not often touched on this point as a matter to be proved ; nor do I think it is needful or desirable often to do so. I do not imagine that the peculiar danger which is likely to threaten any of you, is the infection of what are called Unitarian opinions. It is mostly, I think, another class of society, and one differently educated, that

is most in danger from Unitarianism; with us here I should expect that we should either be in danger of judging those who hold such notions too harshly, and of being far too well satisfied with ourselves for not being as they are; or else that the temptation will be to something far worse than Unitarianism—to the casting away of our Christian faith altogether, and of our very faith in God. Utter unbelief is far more really prevalent, I believe, than Unitarianism; and its language is far more dangerous. For Unitarianism, acknowledging the authority of Scripture, and asserting its own peculiar interpretation of it, appears to me to lose in strength intellectually, exactly as much as I hope it gains by so doing morally. I mean, that the very clinging to the authority of Scripture, and professing to follow Christ and Christ's Apostles, which makes a wide difference morally between them and the unbeliever, yet renders their peculiar arguments the less dangerous, inasmuch as it forces them to rest their cause on interpretations of Scripture which the most ordinary knowledge of language and of the common principles of criticism, show at once to be extravagant.

It is more, I think, to the purpose, when we consider to what society so many of you are likely to be removed when you go away from this place, to remind you, that while it is easy, I think very easy, to see the errors of Unitarianism intellectually, yet that many speak of it with a violence of condemnation which in them is clearly unnatural and wrong; they neither know its evil, nor the good of that truth to which it is opposed. He who could truly speak of the evil of Unitarianism must be one who has made some progress himself in real godliness; who has felt the blessing of some of those helps of which Unitarianism would deprive him. He who condemns Unitarianism for denying Christ's Divinity, does he make Christ's divinity a real support to his own soul? He who

cries out against the impiety of those who would do away with Christ's Atonement, does his own faith in that atonement lead him in true and earnest love to follow that Lord who died for him?

I can well conceive a short season in a young man's life, in which, believing on the authority of others that Unitarianism is the denial of most important truths, and going about humbly and earnestly to derive to himself the benefit of those truths, he may for a while be justified in condemning Unitarianism, even though he may not yet have become able himself to appreciate its evil. But this state of things must in its very nature be short. Either we get beyond it, or we fall back from it;—either we attain to that experience of the virtue of the doctrines of Christ's Divinity and Atonement, which enables us to know how sad it is to want them; or else we relax in our endeavours to obtain it, and then we do but condemn others for denying in word what we are no less denying ourselves in heart and in life. And few things are more painful than to see the union of theological uncharitableness and religious indifference,—to see, as we often do see, men violent in condemnation of others for their denial of certain truths, which truths it is most evident they themselves neglect altogether.

Unhappily, there are few things easier to our nature than to entertain feelings of dislike. We dislike others from a hundred causes, more or less personal, and then are thankful to any one who furnishes us with a pretence for our dislike on some ground of principle, which we neither knew nor cared for. It often happens that we dislike a man or a party who really have something in them which deserves to be disliked; but it is clear that this is not our reason for disliking them, if we are at no pains to gain the good opposed to their evil. We dislike the dishonest, not on principle, but merely for our own selfish convenience,

if in our practice it is evident that honesty is not our rule. And this is now much to be insisted upon, because religious animosities are violent amongst us beyond all proportion to our love of truth and of Christ; and it is evident, therefore, that these animosities are no part of Christian zeal, but of lower and worldly feelings, by which we deceive ourselves and others. Sometimes, too, our violence against an opinion is greatest when we feel ourselves least secure in reason from its influence; we endeavour in a manner by the loudness of our voices to conceal our secret fear. It is no hopeful symptom to see those of any age, least of all the young, particularly forward in religious dislikes: but it is a good symptom in old and young to be eminent for their religious affections;—not to be loud in denouncing heretics, but to be simple and earnest in loving Christ and their brethren. The love of truth is the only sure way of teaching us to dislike error aright; to dislike it in itself and for itself, to dislike it reasonably, calmly, charitably; to be most secure from being misled by it ourselves, whilst we make the largest and most Christian allowance for the men who hold it.

RUGBY CHAPEL :

April 1, 1838.

SERMON XXI.

CHRIST'S WORDS AND CHRIST'S WORK.

ST. JOHN ix. 4.

I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

IN these words of our Lord there is nothing which peculiarly belongs to His divine nature, nothing even which belongs to Him as a prophet; they were spoken as by one who was in all points tempted like as we are, by one who became fully partaker of our flesh and blood. They are His words spoken as He is our great example. It is no presumption, no claiming to ourselves any portion of His power, either as prophet or as king, if we pray and labour to be able to repeat them ourselves truly. This, indeed, is the great difference, that whereas Christ not only said the words of the text, but did accordingly,—if we repeat them, it is too often like the son in the parable, whom his father had told to work in his vineyard: his answer was, ‘I go, sir,’ but he went not. So we may say, that we must work the works of Him that sent us while it is day; but we do not actually work them. We may say that the night cometh when no man can work; but we live as if the day would last for ever.

Many and many are the words of our Lord, the riches of whose wisdom will far outlast the longest life in its attempts to come to the end of them. From the first

time when our childish attention was drawn by the mere beauty of the story in His parables, or the solemn and affectionate impressiveness of His promises and commands, down to the latest hour in which our unimpaired faculties can ponder over them, their wisdom and excellence seem continually to be rising upon us,—the light which streams from them appears to be growing ever more brilliant, ever more searching, ever more cheering and more delightful. Every year's experience, both of our own hearts and of the lives of others, sets their manifold truth more fully before us. In every fresh combination of thoughts and ideas, in every new view which we acquire of the bearings of the world around us, their universal range has gone before us;—we find them the light and life of every new country which our minds discover, no less than of that with which we have been long familiar. I speak thus on purpose, not that I suppose it possible for many who hear me to enter at present fully into the truth of what I have been saying, but to tell them beforehand what will hereafter be their own feelings if they continue faithfully to study Christ's word. There are persons to whom the Scriptures are now their daily bread of life, who would find it impossible to express their admiration and delight in them, whom I could startle by recalling to them their words when they first began to study them—I do not mean words of profaneness, but expressing their strong sense of the difficulties of what they were reading, and doubting how that could ever be so intensely valuable which they found at that time so obscure.

For all those, then, who loving what they can understand of the Scripture, yet find themselves unable fully to enter into the excellence of many parts of it, nay, who though they love the plainer parts, yet do not see in them that perfection of wisdom which they hear ascribed to them,—for them there is a most encouraging prospect if

they do not cut themselves off from it. If they were to hear such language as I have been using, ten or twenty years hence, it would then seem to them not exaggerated, but inadequate; their own sense of the treasures contained in the Scriptures would go far beyond it; or else—and it is a fearful alternative—the language would sound not exaggerated merely, but utterly wild and extravagant: those who now can go with it a certain way, would then despise it altogether. So surely do advancing years tell upon our minds for good or for evil;—so surely will your full manhood be greatly improved in the knowledge and love of God, or greatly fallen back in it; it most certainly will not be fixed at the same point at which you are arrived now.

I was led to say thus much by thinking over the words of the text, and considering how complete was the lesson which they contained. And then connecting them with the parable of the sower, and with other parables which I have from time to time alluded to, it was very striking to compare the picture there given, with what is daily passing before our eyes, and to consider its perfect and startling truth. ‘I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work.’ We must work, and that diligently; but not Satan’s work nor our own, but the works of God. The soil must bear much, but its strength must not be wasted on weeds, however luxuriant; it must bear that which will be kept for ever. We must work while it is day, for the night is coming. Even while working busily, and working the works of God, we must not forget our own infirmity. We must not repeat those other words of Christ, ‘My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,’ for that was language suited to Him only in whom it was no presumption to make Himself equal with God. But we must remember and repeat His words in the text,—for in them

He speaks as one of us, and not as our God,—‘The night cometh when no man can work :’ the day which is so nappy to us, and we would fain hope not unprofitably wasted, is yet hastening to its close. It is of no less importance that we should remember that the time is soon coming when we cannot work, than that we should avail ourselves of the time present, to work in it to the utmost.

I will not say much now to those, numerous as they probably are, who require simply the first part of the lesson contained in the text, ‘to work while it is day, and not be idle.’ Their fault being thoughtlessness, any word spoken to them is likely to make but a small impression; they hear it and forget it. Yet thus much may be said, and perhaps it may strike you:—When you divide your companions around you into the working ones and the careless ones; when you know, as you well do know, whether any individual belongs to the one class or the other, you are as it were making the very division which Christ made in His parable of the sower:—you are separating off on the one hand those who are like the hard wayside, or the shallow stony ground, and on the other hand, those who may prove hereafter either the thorny ground or the fruitful. That division of the idle and the thoughtless, so long as they continue idle and thoughtless, is condemned already. No good fruit can be produced by soil that bears nothing. Their character, if it continues unaltered, is that of the beasts that perish, with the fearful difference that what in the brutes is a mere condition of their nature, is in us a deadly sin. To live with no more than a brute’s enjoyment, a brute’s intelligence, and a brute’s merely instinctive likings and dislikings, is in us not a forfeiture only of this world, but of eternity; it is not only resigning the dignity of a man, but incurring the everlasting misery of a sinner.

But from this wretched and most degraded condition

there are many instruments which raise us ; many that are effectual, but some which are at the same time dangerous. We know well enough, that human motives are very frequently found strong enough to excite the careless to attention, and the indolent to work. Human motives are naturally sufficient for this, for even this world's prizes. depend generally upon our exertions and our reputation. And these human motives are various: the love of distinction, the wish to please our friends, the fear of punishment, the hope of reward ; and after some time, when the effort of exertion has been once made, the very pleasure of it encourages us to continue it. Thus from one or more of these causes, many are brought over continually from a state of idleness to one of application ; they learn to know the value of time,—they work, and work diligently, while it is day. And this is no doubt a great step gained ; it is the beginning of a progress to everlasting life, a departure from a state of certain condemnation. By whatever of the motives just named either boy or man is brought from a state of brute thoughtlessness to one of thought and activity, undoubtedly there is a good work done ; undoubtedly the person so altered is so far nearer than he was before to the kingdom of God.

Let us confess this, and confess it with thankfulness ; but let us remember that he of whom it is said that Christ loved him for the progress which he had made in goodness, yet went away grieving, and, so far as we hear of him, fell short of the kingdom of God, because he did not go on still farther. Let us be thankful that any who before were careless are now working ; but let us not rest, nor ever let them rest, till we may hope that through Christ's Spirit we and they are not working only, but working the works of God.

And here one difficulty which arises is this, that in one sense we are working the work of God probably already :

for certainly the particular business of our profession, or calling, or situation, is to us the work of God. And thus, if actively engaged in that, we may seem to be, and in one sense are, not only working, but working the works of God, we are doing what God wills us to do. This seems to me one of the most dangerous snares of all; we are busy, and we are busy about our duty, so that the more we work, we fancy that we are doing our duty more; and the very thing which seems to be our help, is unto us an occasion of falling.

That it should not be so, two things are to be observed. First, we say to ourselves that we are busily engaged in our duty, and that our duty is God's work. We say this to ourselves if anything leads us to examine into our state: but it would be well if we said it not only to excuse ourselves, but habitually; if we said it not to ourselves only, but to God. For if we are busied in God's work, we are fellow-workers with God; and what more natural than to ask His aid and His blessing on it? Let us come before Him, and do so. But there seems some unwillingness to do this; we will talk about our employment, and think about it, but we are not so apt to pray about it. Wherefore is this, or how can it be, that, being busied as we say in God's work, we are not fond of thinking of Him who is working with us? Is it not too plain that when we come to the point we feel that it is not God's work, but our own? that we have taken it in a manner away from His co-operation, and separated it from His blessing? that, feeling how we have unsanctified it, we dread speaking to God concerning it, knowing that in His sight we have rendered both it and ourselves sinful? We may be well assured that this is a true touchstone, if every morning we bring as it were our work before God, and crave His aid and blessing on it; if every evening we again come to render our account to Him, to say how much we have

done, and to ask His pardon for having done so little and so imperfectly ; if at other times in the day, even when most busy, we offer in thought our daily sacrifice, one passing thought, one short prayer,—‘ Lord, I am Thy servant ; this is Thy will, and Thy work, bless me in it for Christ’s sake,’—then the answer to our inquiry may be boldly given ; God himself will confirm our heart’s testimony ; our deeds will be made manifest that they are wrought in God.

The second caution is contained in the latter words of the text, ‘ the night cometh when no man can work.’ Worldly-mindedness among the first Christians had one powerful check which it cannot have now, in their belief that the world itself was soon to be destroyed. The works of the greatest and best of men, as far as they related to earth, could not be of any great importance, as in a few years hence earth itself would perish. But now we are apt to be beguiled by the thought that our works may abide for centuries ; that they may influence for good thousands as yet unborn. It may be so ; but this is no safe thought for us to dwell upon : it may cause us, if indulged, to become castaways ourselves, however much we may have benefited others. It is a far safer thought to consider, not how long our works may last, but how soon we must leave them. The shortness of our own time bids us remember that we are but God’s instruments, appointed to labour for a little while on a particular little part of His great work ; but that neither its beginning nor its finishing belongs to us, nor can we so much as understand the vastness of its range. Our best praise is that bestowed on David, that we serve our own generation by the will of God, and then fall asleep, and be gathered to our fathers, and see corruption. Whether our work may endure on earth or no, we can never tell ; the wisdom of the wise, and the virtue of the good, have too often remained without fruit, except that eternal fruit which remains for all those who work

God's work heartily, without presuming to think that it is their own.

We look forward often enough ; it is indeed one of the distinctions of our nature that we can do so ; the future is frequently the subject of our hope and fear. It were well if, while looking forward, as we sometimes do, far into our future life, we would look at once to the end of it ; that we would form something of a definite notion of the prospect before us,—so many years of youth, so many of prime, so many of decay, and then the end. This is a very different thing from the unwise practices of superstition, such as meditating over the remains of mortality, and bringing before our eyes and minds, not the solemnity of death, but its loathsomeness. For this there is sometimes even a morbid eagerness ; but this is not the soberness of Christian wisdom. I would advise none to dwell in detail upon the circumstances of death to excite the feelings, but rather to keep before their minds simply the general truth, that after such a period they will have ceased to live ; that earth will to them have passed away, and the time of judgment be arrived. This, I imagine, can be nothing but wholesome at every age,—not unnatural even to the youngest. Do not fancy your time shorter nor longer than it is, but simply consider it as it is : a period very likely of many years, but still only of many years ; that there will most surely be an end of it. Then remember what that end is, that it is a time when no one can work any longer ; when all must rest for ever, or for ever suffer.

RUGBY CHAPEL :

December 1, 1833.

SERMON XXII.

*CHRIST'S RESURRECTION. THE CONFESSION
OF THOMAS.*

ST. JOHN xx. 28.

And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

EVERY one, I suppose, who reads the Scriptures much, cannot but feel that there are certain particular parts of them to which he turns with an especial delight; which seem in a peculiar manner to meet the wants of his own individual nature, whether for comfort, or for warning, or for mere thought and reflection. Nor does this appear blamable so long as we do not neglect or despise other parts of the Scripture; it belongs rather to that variety of tastes which God has given to men, and which, as it is certainly in a very large proportion innocent, so we can often see that it is beneficial.

But of these passages of Scripture so especially cherished by different minds, a very large number will I think be found to exist in the Gospel of St. John. Most readers feel that this Gospel contains some of the most invaluable treasures of Christ's revelation; that it contains what could be supplied to us from no other quarter. Thus, for instance, in the accounts given of our Lord's appearances to His disciples after His resurrection, how ill could we spare the account given by St. John of His appearance to Thomas, and that of His appearance to Peter and his

companions by the sea of Tiberias. Confining ourselves for the present to the former, how great and manifold are the treasures which a few verses contain for us!

The Collect for St. Thomas's Day addresses God as having 'for the more confirmation of the faith suffered His holy Apostle Thomas to be doubtful in His Son's resurrection.' And this is one of the most obvious uses of this passage of the Scripture. We are, I think, hardly apt to be enough aware how much of all our Christian faith and hope must rest on the reality of our Lord's resurrection. It is in the first place the fulfilment of all Prophecy. I mean, that whereas all Prophecy looks forward to the triumph of good over evil,—to its triumph not partially merely, but entirely, and with over-measure,—so the resurrection of Christ is as yet the only adequate fulfilment of these expectations; but it is itself fully adequate. Everywhere else, the last seen and recorded thing in every man's history is the triumph of death over him. Hope and faith, resting upon Christ's resurrection, do indeed go farther than this; there are many, no doubt, of whom our last and prevailing idea is that of their happiness; we believe that death's triumph will be altogether, and is already in part, undone. But this can be belief and hope only, not sight and knowledge. It still remains true that the last known and recorded thing of the strongest man is his weakness; of the wisest man, the failure of his powers; of the best man, that he has suffered the punishment of sin. Thus, as far as sight and knowledge go, the end of every man is the triumph of the enemy over him; the victory cannot be said to belong to the cause of good. But in Christ this is not so; with Him the end—I do not say the end as hoped and believed, but as seen, as known, as recorded—was His triumph over the enemy; the victory was His wholly and finally. One such instance,—one seen, and known, and recorded instance,—may indeed be

the support of hope and faith for the rest. If Christ's triumph was complete, so also may be the triumph of those that are Christ's. But without this, let hope go as far as she will, let faith be ever so confident, still Prophecy has been unfulfilled, still experience gives no encouragement. If Christ be not risen, all that is known of the best and wisest of the sons of men is, that they were alive and are dead; that they served God in their own generation, and advanced His glory, but that for themselves they were not conquerors at last; that the great enemy has prevailed against them, and has cut them off from the land of the living.

Well then may it be said with the Apostle, that if Christ is not risen, our faith is vain. And therefore, how thankful ought we to be for the knowledge of this great truth, that Christ is risen indeed. 'Let God deliver him now if he will have him,' was the scornful language of the scribes and Pharisees, when they saw our Lord upon the cross: 'for he said, I am the Son of God.' If Jesus was truly the Son of God, God, they thought, would deliver Him: if He were not the Son of God, then death would have dominion over Him. But death had not dominion over Him, for He rose again from the dead. It was indeed almost too great a joy to be believed. He had heard all the scoffs of His enemies in silence; He had not come down from the cross; He had not repelled the hand of death, but had yielded to it. His disciples had seen Him dead and buried in the grave. Was it possible to think that the prey should be torn from the spoiler even after he had begun to devour it; that there could be one found who had not avoided death only because He rather chose to triumph over it? There might be illusion; the spirit of one so good and so beloved by God, might be allowed to return to comfort His friends, to assure them that death had not done all his work: but who could dare to hope

that he should see, not the spirit of the dead, but the very person of the living Jesus?—that he should be satisfied by his very bodily senses, not merely that death had not done all his work, but that he had done actually nothing; that he had triumphed neither over soul nor body? Surely it was a natural expression of one fearing to resign himself lightly to a conviction of such overwhelming blessedness, ‘Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.’ Thanks be to God, who allowed his Apostle to be thus careful ere he consented to believe, that we from his care might derive such perfect confidence.

Behold, some days are past; Thomas has not seen his Lord; he has not had the proofs which he desired that it was Christ Himself, and not His departed spirit, whom his fellow-disciples had seen. Perhaps his fears had caught the minds of the rest; it might be so,—they might have been deceived by an illusion; it might have been only the spirit of Christ whom they had seen, the spirit of one who was dead. But a week is gone; and again at evening, on that same first day of the week on which, eight days before, or seven after our manner of reckoning, they had well believed that they had seen the Lord,—again they were within, again with fastened doors, and Thomas was now with them. Then came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and said, ‘Peace be unto you.’ He answers to the words which Thomas had spoken to the ears of his fellow-disciples only; but it is to the thought of his heart rather than to the words of his lips that the Searcher of Hearts answers, ‘Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing.’ Eye, ear, and touch, at once appealed to, and at once satisfied;—the form and look, the voice, the solid and actual body; and withal, not the

senses only, but the mind satisfied too;—the knowledge that searches the very reins and hearts, the love that loveth unto the end, infinite and eternal. Who is this in whom all these are combined? Not a spirit, yet most certainly more than man; alive in body, soul, and spirit, perfect in knowledge, infinite in love! One only can it be in heaven and in earth,—He of whom bare all the prophets witness,—the Hope of Israel, the Priest of Israel, the King of Israel, the Lord of Israel. May we and all the whole Church join in the first fruits of Christian worship offered by the Apostle, now at last resigning himself to the fulness of his joy; may we from the bottom of our hearts say, as he did to our risen Saviour, ‘My Lord and my God’!

But is there even something yet more? ‘Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.’ A few days before Christ had prayed, not for His present disciples only, but ‘for all those who were to believe on him through their word.’ How graciously is His act in accordance with His prayer. Thomas was fully satisfied; his fellow-disciples were satisfied; they had received all that they desired, and thankfully acknowledged it. But Christ remembers those also ‘who were to believe on him through their word.’ To them must be given that same satisfaction which His first disciples were then enjoying; the beloved disciple of our Lord who had seen first the empty sepulchre, and who was now rejoicing in the full presence of Him who had been there, but was now risen, he was to convey what he had himself seen to the knowledge of posterity. And he was to convey it hallowed as it were by Christ’s especial message; he was to record that, on that evening in that one chamber, there were present before the Lord not His eleven disciples only, but all His universal Church to the end of time; to them

He shows Himself; to them He addresses Himself; nay, His words to them are if possible even more gracious than those to His earliest disciples:—‘Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed.’ We have all our portion in Christ’s look and words of love, we have our portion in the full conviction then afforded that He was risen indeed; and besides all this, we have received a peculiar blessing: Christ Himself gives us the proof of His resurrection, and blesses us for the joy with which we welcome it.

With this most gracious message from our Lord Himself to those who should read his Gospel, St. John may be said to have concluded it. The last chapter was in all probability added afterwards; its character is clearly that of a distinct supplement, added after the original design of the work itself was completed. And the last two verses of the twentieth chapter are but a reference to our other accounts of our Lord’s life, lest any should think that because St. John had omitted so much of what others had recorded he meant to throw a suspicion on its truth. ‘Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.’ St. John has himself related only a few, but he tells us that these were but a few out of many; it was far from his purpose to relate all, probably it has not been God’s will that even the other Evangelists should have related all; it may be, and probably is true, that many other signs did Jesus in the presence of His disciples which are not written in the books of any of the Evangelists. But what we have were ‘written, that we might believe that Jesus was the Christ the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through his name.’

Seeing then that St. John’s Gospel properly concludes with our Lord’s answer to Thomas’s confession, it is not

surely fancy, if we connect this end of the Gospel with the beginning of it, and observe how St. John brings round his account of our Lord to the very point from which he began it. His Gospel opens with declaring who Christ was from the beginning,—the Lord and Maker of all things. He then relates how the Lord of all things became flesh and dwelt among us; or, in the language of St. Paul, how He who was before in the form of God took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man. Whilst He was on earth His divine nature was veiled from the eyes of His disciples, but now that He was risen to die no more, it was declared to them fully; and thus we find Thomas, immediately on being convinced that his Lord was truly risen, acknowledging Him to be his Lord and his God. So that St. John ends at that very point where the statement of Christ's nature made at the beginning of his Gospel was justified as it were by the event; he had told how Christ had come forth from His Father and was come into the world; and he ends his Gospel with showing how He left the world and returned to His Father, and how His true nature was at last manifested and acknowledged.

His true nature manifested and acknowledged! Yes, in one sense certainly; acknowledged in all our forms of worship, repeated in our creeds from one end of the world to the other. But not so acknowledged as St. John meant when he said, as we heard in the Epistle this morning, 'Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?' If this, and this only, be in St. John's sense an acknowledgement of Christ's true nature, then I fear that He is not yet acknowledged; not fully acknowledged, but I hope acknowledged in part, and becoming acknowledged more and more. I do trust that your faith is not in vain, that you do many of you know

what it is to gain a victory through faith over the world and over yourselves. I do trust that to many of you Christ is risen indeed. May He be more perfectly acknowledged by them and by us all.

RUGBY CHAPEL :

April 2, 1837.

SERMON XXIII.

THE ANCIENT CHURCH.

ACTS ii. 46, 47.

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people.

It has always seemed to me one of the great advantages of the course of study generally pursued in our English schools, that it draws our minds so continually to dwell upon the past. Every day we are engaged in studying the languages, the history, and the thoughts of men who lived nearly or more than two thousand years ago; if we have to inquire about laws or customs, about works of art or science, they are the laws, customs, arts, and sciences, not of existing nations, but of those whose course has been long since ended. And the very difficulty which is often found in realizing the things of which we read, the difficulty of representing to ourselves times so remote and so unlike in many respects to our own, shows how much the mind requires such a discipline, and how naturally it rests contented with the scenes immediately around it.

On the other hand, there are some who study the books which relate to past times very diligently, but who have no real understanding of the times themselves, because

they do not know or understand their own. What they raise up to themselves being drawn wholly from books, is a dead and imperfect image; and when they would set up this image as a model by which to fashion the present state of things, the folly of the proceeding is almost ridiculous. Nay, of the two, he is a wiser man and a safer guide, who, knowing nothing of the past, has yet had a large experience of the present and has observed it carefully, rather than the other, who is blind to the very world in which he lives, and therefore is perfectly incapable, with all his reading, of understanding a world in which he does not live.

Again, in studying the past as a guide for the present, it is of importance that we study it widely and fully. In this respect our classical reading, though not without its imperfections, is on the whole conducted wisely. That is to say, although we are led to study some periods of ancient history more than others, yet in the main we are led to an acquaintance with all its periods, we study it in its beginning, middle, and end. Where this is not done, the knowledge gained will be often delusive; we see things taken just at the moment when they were going on well or ill, and we are shut out from that farther prospect which would have taught us how that seeming good was full of the seeds of centuries of after-mischief; or how that seeming evil was but the short and cheap price paid for a long futurity of good. To study one single period of history, is to take a passage apart from its context, and thus to lose its real sense and purport. We cannot judge of what history has to teach us, if we only stop to listen to her for a short time, and go away before she has concluded her instruction.

These thoughts present themselves when we are led to consider that important subject, the study of Christian antiquity. Important it is, and indeed indispensable to a

thorough understanding of the Church in its actual condition, of its good and of its evil. But it is not to be understood itself without a lively sense of what the Church is actually ; so that from what we do know and see,—the varieties of human character and their connection with particular lines of opinion,—we may be able to fill up and to comprehend the scanty information which the actual writings of the early Church can furnish, and image to ourselves truly the picture of what the early Church really was. Nor, again, must we leave these two periods, the age of the primitive Church and our own, unconnected with one another. Seventeen centuries are the link between them ; a continuous link, by which, if I may so speak, the electric power of the earliest age is continued on to us ; yet having other properties in them than those of simply transmitting from the ages before them to the ages after them : something they have added, something, perhaps, taken away ; and if they have not affected the quality of that which is transmitted, they have at least greatly affected our character and circumstances who are to be the receivers of it. Their error was great who, passing over nearly fifteen centuries, used to leap at once in their studies from the Apostles to the Reformers ; but theirs would be much greater who, studying carefully the records of the Church from the first century to the fifth, were then to break off and to apply their supposed knowledge and experience for the guidance of the Church now.

Some, perhaps, will have already anticipated me in their application of these remarks to the words of my text. Those words contain a description of the Church at Jerusalem, almost immediately after the ascension of our Lord. We see and feel at once how different a state of things is here described from that which we actually witness. We feel further,—that is, all who can think and feel upon such matters,—we feel further that this description cannot be wholly indifferent to us ; that the Church, so soon after

its foundation, with Christ's words as it were still sounding in its ears, guided by Christ's own apostles, and having so lately received the promised baptism of His Spirit, must be in many points capable of serving as our model: that if we are wholly unlike it, the difference must in great measure at least be matter of regret or of blame. And then comes the natural and earnest question, how can we lessen or remove this difference? how can we bring ourselves back to the standard of primitive Christianity?

Then we look at all the facts which we can possibly recover from the darkness of time, relating to the early church,—all its institutions, all its practices, the very names of its offices, the very style of its language. 'All these,' we may say, 'belonged to the primitive Church; let us restore them all.' But this is absolutely impossible; the very Past will not live again. If we were to insist on restoring it altogether, it would be like those who should unbury the dead; we should restore, not the living friend, whom we loved and honoured, but only a lifeless corpse. But the thing is impossible. We do not raise our friends' bodies out of their graves; we cannot bring back the actual image and exact outward resemblance of departed ages.

Are therefore past ages for ever lost to us? Must we look at what is good and wise and holy in them, as on that which we must only lament in vain, and can never hope to restore? And this too, above all, in Christ's holy Church; as if God's hand were shortened now that He could not save, or as if our Lord was no longer exalted at God's right hand, with all power in heaven and in earth? God forbid! There is no reason for such despair; there is no impossibility in the restoration of all that was good in the primitive Church. We may become the true descendants of our fathers, though we cannot become our very fathers themselves, nor make our age theirs.

'They, continuing daily with one accord in the temple,

and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.' Now compare the language of the Psalmist in one of the Psalms of this very evening's service; 'One thing have I desired of the Lord which I will require, even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit his temple.' The prayer of the Psalmist and the practice of the early Christians are, we see, exactly in accordance. But do we not feel that this dwelling in the house of the Lord, which he so desired, and that continuing daily in the temple, which the first Christians practised, are both of them, so to speak, typical: we must go farther before we arrive at the very reality. That reality undoubtedly is the daily walking with God, the daily abiding in God. And if we do not so walk and so abide, we undoubtedly have not that blessing for which the Psalmist prayed, nor do we truly imitate the example of Christ's early Church.

Further, the early Christians continued 'breaking bread from house to house;' that is, they assembled continually in each other's houses, and as they ate and drank together, so once in every day their eating and drinking together was that solemn act of Christian communion, which in the highest manner bound them to one another and to Christ. And doubtless the end of that communion was the end of every other commandment, namely, the increase of love towards Christ and towards one another.

I have purposely put these two parts of the life of the early Christians in this manner, because I would wish to show where the spiritual interpretation of Scripture becomes often dangerous, and leads us away from the spirit which it professes to follow, no less than from the letter which it does not scruple to neglect. I have said that the essence of the Psalmist's prayer, and the early Christians'

practice, was the walking with God, and the dwelling in God. I have said also that the essence of the Holy Communion itself is the increase of love towards Christ, and towards our brethren. But the error of spiritual interpretation consists in supposing that, if we clearly see the antitype or reality, we may at once cast aside the type as incapable of affording any instruction. For instance, it may be said that the walking with God is all that is important; the walking in the actual earthly temple is altogether indifferent. Now here is a point of the greatest difficulty, judging from experience, because the type has always been in danger of being idolized on the one hand, and despised on the other. The truth is, that the type itself is not wholly typical: it has a real affinity with that to which it points, greater or less in different instances, but always up to a certain measure. As in the case now before us; the walking in the visible temple is, it is true, typical of the walking in heart with God; but then there is a real resemblance between them. The one has a tendency towards the other; so that he who never walked in the visible temple would never be likely to walk with God in spirit. And thus the true imitation of the practice of the primitive Church would be, no doubt, that we should all walk with God in heart. But in order to do this we have need of helps and means; and as the early Christians found that it kept God in their minds to dwell in His visible temple, so it is reasonable to think that to have churches constantly before our eyes, and to have them frequently opened for divine service, would with us also be a means of keeping God in our minds; and that if with all these helps we still should be in danger of forgetting Him, much more are we likely to forget Him if we use no help at all.

More frequent church services, more frequent communions, would then, it seems, be a real imitation of the

primitive Church, and not merely a fond or formal one ; because, with relation to the end aimed at by both the early Christians and us, namely, the walking with God in heart and spirit, we stand nearly in their case ; and the same human nature in both of us, not being here affected by any differences of age or country, is likely to require in both the same helps.

But in the meanwhile, for those who cannot alter the Church's ordinances, or if there be any causes which in any place render the imitation of the primitive Church as yet impracticable or inexpedient, then here is the proper place for the recollection that what is of the last necessity always, and to all, is the walking with God in heart and spirit. If our helps are fewer, it is our misfortune ; but if we do not use such as we have, it is our fault. This chapel is open but rarely ; the communion is celebrated in it still more rarely :—so much the more reason, then, why we should make the most of the occasions that are offered to us ; why we should not be careless or inattentive during the short time in the week in which we can be in God's outward temple ; why we should not turn away from the breaking of the bread of Christ's communion, on those rare occasions when we can partake of it. This we may all do ; and to neglect this is our folly and our sin. God is not tied in His dealings with us to save by few or many. If He gives many opportunities and we neglect them, as not needing them, that is our own presumption ; but if He gives but few, and we avail ourselves thankfully of these few, their power multiplies under His blessing, like the five loaves and two small fishes which fed more than five thousand men ; and without continuing daily in the temple, or daily breaking the bread of Christ's communion, yet if we profit by such opportunities as we have of hearing His word, and partaking of His communion, we shall share the blessing of those who were in Christ at the be-

ginning, and we too, like them, shall eat our meat with joy and singleness of heart: we shall live in thankfulness to God, and having favour with all good men.

But now, in conclusion, as I have in the case of the text taken the example of the early Church as applicable in more than its mere spirit to ourselves: or rather, as we have seen, not only that we should aim at the same end with the first Christians, but that we should do well also to pursue it by the same means,—to what purpose, it may be asked, were those cautions as to the study of antiquity, which I gave at the beginning of my sermon, as if the example of the early Church were not immediately applicable? The cautions were given because on very many occasions they are greatly needed; and when referring in one instance to the example of the early Church, I wished to show how that example might always be consulted with advantage. Doubtless there are many points in which he may run who readeth; in which the practice of the early Christians was so clearly good, and their circumstances respecting it so much the same as ours, that it would be our wisdom to follow their example closely. But their practice was not always good; or at any rate, difference of circumstances, in many instances, makes that which was most right and good in them no longer right or desirable for us. And here it is that a lively understanding of the present, and a comprehensive knowledge of the past, are, as I said, so necessary. I am most convinced of the wisdom of studying the remains of Christian antiquity; only it is to be desired that that study should be so conducted, and united with so much of wider knowledge and lively understanding, that it may not sometimes mislead, and be useful only by chance; but may minister uniformly and according to fixed and intelligible principles, to edification and to truth.

SERMON XXIV

ST. PAUL'S SPEECHES.

ACTS xiii. 43.

Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

THE congregation here spoken of was one at Antioch in Pisidia, to which Paul had been setting forth the first principles of Christian truth. It may be observed, that the wisdom of God has provided for us in the Acts of the Apostles, specimens of St. Paul's manner of addressing three very different classes of hearers; from each of which we may derive a lesson in speaking to persons under like circumstances. We have in his speech to the Athenians a specimen of his way of opening the Gospel to those who are wholly unacquainted with it, who knew nothing of the expectation of the Messiah, nothing of the Old Testament, and next to nothing of the Jewish people; to men whose minds had in them nothing Eastern, but had received in the fullest measure the benefits of that cultivation which they were designed first to enjoy themselves, and then to communicate to all mankind. Again, in his address to the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, contained in the chapter from which the text is taken, we have a specimen of his way of opening the Gospel to those who were Jews either by blood or by religion; to those, that is, to whom the

promises of the Messiah were known, and who were well acquainted with the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Thirdly, in his address to the elders of the Church of Ephesus, when they came to meet him at Miletus on his way to Jerusalem, we have a specimen of his way of speaking to those who were acquainted fully with the Gospel. As in the other two speeches we might suppose that more truth was yet behind, which could not be communicated all at once to those who knew nothing of Christianity, so we may be sure that in a speech addressed not only to Christians, but to elders of the Church, to the rulers and teachers of the Christian society, there could be no reserves whatever; that whatever is to them insisted upon as the substance of the Gospel, is so to us, and to all Christians; and that any man who would dream of some yet higher and more secret doctrine, taught only to those most advanced in Christian perfection, is merely adding to God's wisdom and God's truth, not the wisdom and truth of man, for in such a case the words truth and wisdom have no place, but rather his folly and superstition and falsehood.

It is not, however, with the view of showing the differences between these addresses of the Apostle to different persons, that I was led to the choice of my text. It may be enough for this view of the subject simply to notice, that as in the speech to the Athenians we find the Apostle setting forth the great outlines, so to speak, of a Christian's faith,—that there is one God, the common Maker and Father of all men, higher and purer than we can conceive of, a righteous Judge, who will render to all men according to their deeds, and who, by raising up Jesus from the dead has given the pledge that all men shall likewise rise for their happiness or for their misery;—so in the speech to the Jews of Antioch, and in that to the elders of Ephesus, we find just that one point added which man, wholly

ignorant of God and of the Jewish covenant, could not at first have well borne,—namely, that Jesus is more than a pledge of our own resurrection, more than the righteous Judge before whom we must all stand to give our account; that He is also our Saviour, who stands before us when we truly repent of our sins towards God, to claim our thankful faith that for His sake our sins are fully forgiven and made as though they had never been: who presents Himself to us again when, by reason of our imperfect repentance and most imperfect obedience, we see not how we can have confidence towards God,—to tell us that for His sake, and through faith in His blood, we are justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses; that we, though sinners, are accepted and forgiven, and loved as children by our Heavenly Father, because God gave His own Son to die for us.

This was given as the substance of Christianity to the members of the synagogue of Antioch: and we find it again spoken of as such in the speech to the elders of Ephesus. One thing, however, we notice, which the elders of the Church of Ephesus had learned, which might not perhaps have been known in the first instance by Paul's hearers at Antioch. For when those who had been used to the Old Testament, and to what is there so earnestly taught concerning worshipping God only,—when they were told that Jesus was their Saviour, when they were told to believe, not merely in His word but in Himself, to trust to His person as a worthy object of faith,—they would ask, 'Who is this Jesus, that we may so regard Him; and how can a man no longer upon earth be loved as our Saviour, and trusted in as our sure Help and Deliverer, and be an object of our faith, without interfering with that faith and love and trust which seem in the invisible world to be due to God only?'

Then they would be told to look into the Scriptures

and see how God had said that He would Himself visit them, that He would Himself come to His temple, and redeem His people. This promise He had fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. Let them not fear then to be guilty of idolatry in loving Christ with all their hearts, in believing in Him with an entire faith, in trusting Him with a perfect trust: they might safely honour the Son even as they honoured the Father; for that divine nature which in the Father was invisible and incomprehensible, veiled in light which no man can approach unto, was in the Son made manifest in our flesh, and so set forth before us that we could see, and hear, and feel, and understand. And this having become a familiar truth to the elders of Ephesus, they were nothing startled when Paul expressed it to them in the very strongest words which God has left recorded for us in His Scriptures; when he ventured to unite to their minds so closely and so vividly the notions of their Saviour Christ being both God and man, as to call them,—in language not elsewhere to be met with, in language which some unwise Christians were so afraid of, that they actually in many copies altered the very text to avoid it,—the overseers over the Church of God, ‘which he had purchased with his own blood.’

But now to come to the very words of the text itself. The substance of Christianity had been given in Paul’s address to the synagogue at Antioch. It had been listened to with attention, and had so much interested some of those who heard it, that they besought that these words might be spoken to them the next Sabbath. This is what often happens: it is the natural tribute either to the novelty and interest of any subject in itself, or to the ability and eloquence of him who has been speaking upon it. But the text goes on to say, that when the congregation was broken up, many still followed Paul and Barnabas, and that the apostles then spoke to them and persuaded,

or rather tried to persuade them to continue in the grace of God.

Now this is the point which I wish us to dwell upon,—this proof of the impression remaining after the congregation was broken up, of men seeking to prolong that impression afterwards, and desiring to confirm and to increase that knowledge which they had gained within the walls of the synagogue. With what pleasure can we fancy the apostles to have observed these hearers of their word, who seemed to have heard it in such earnest! How gladly must they have talked with them,—entered into various points more fully than was possible in any public address,—appealed to them in various ways which no one can touch upon who is speaking to a mixed multitude! Yet with all their pleasure and their hope, their knowledge of man's heart must have taught them not to be over-confident, and therefore they would earnestly urge them to continue in the grace of God; to keep up the impression which had already outlasted their stay within the synagogue,—to feed it, and keep it alive, and make it deeper and deeper, that it should remain with them for ever. What the issue was we know not, nor does that concern us, only we may be sure that here, as in other instances, there were some in whom their hopes and endeavours were disappointed; there were some in whom they were to their fullest extent realized.

It is very easy, speaking of this or any other congregation as a body,—considering them only as so many human beings, and not bringing any one of them distinctly home to our minds,—it is very easy to say, what is undoubtedly true, that of that multitude some will retain in their hearts what they hear spoken, and others will forget it; that some will believe, and others will not believe. But certain as this is, when put thus generally, yet the moment that we take away one individual, and present him to our minds, we

could not bear,—and it would be no less wrong than shocking,—to conceive of him as of one that would not believe. For when we consider what is the full meaning of the words ‘not to believe,’ we cannot endure to connect a thought so dreadful with any human being who is to us more than an abstraction; we cannot connect with any face, or voice, or mind that we have actually known, the idea of final impenitence. This is most right; but yet there is one exception;—we may and ought in one instance to depart from the abstract view of the congregation around us. We ought not only to know generally that some will believe, and some will not believe; but in one case we should all make the thought distinct and definite; we should clearly and vividly connect the idea of faith and that of unbelief with a person, with a mind, with a being with which we are most familiar,—we should follow the thought steadily, and not turn away from it till we had possessed ourselves with it wholly. Yes, my brethren, we should each of us do this in one instance, and in one only, and that instance is our own selves.

I lay the stress on the word ‘final.’ It is the notion of our believing or not believing at last that I wish us to dwell upon. We can bear to be unbelieving now, or even to think of ourselves as such ten or twenty years hence. But we must go farther:—we must think what it is to be unbelieving at the last. We say that out of every large congregation some will be so; let us exemplify it then in ourselves. We all know that there must be a time, though some of us may put it later than others, when repentance becomes impossible. Suppose ourselves arrived at that time. We have, then, no longer a Comforter, nor a Saviour, nor a God. In whatever sense the last words may be true, yet it is the doctrine of Scripture that God is in relation only with the living:—to them who are dead He is as though He did not exist at all. We are literally

without God in the world ; that is, without all that is good. We are with all that is evil, such as we now can conceive of, and probably much more. The worst men we know of, the worst we have ever read of, have in them something that is not wholly evil. Pure evil we never saw, and can scarcely conceive it. It is a most faint image of it, yet one sufficiently horrible, to suppose all our acquaintance stripped of all their good and agreeable qualities, and with nothing left but their several faults. What should we then think of the prospect of passing a year or a month in such society? Conceive these faults increased to desperate and fiend-like wickedness, conceive that month or year multiplied into eternity, and we have something of our condition when we are unbelieving at the last. Add to this one thing more ;—when we are in pain or trouble of any kind, we know that there are some who care for us, who feel with us, and try to relieve us. Generally there are some such close around us ; almost certainly there are some such in the world ; quite certainly there is One such at the right hand of God, our truest friend, as well as our mightiest. But when we are unbelieving at the last, all this is over. There exist for us in infinite space no loving looks, no kind words, no feeling of sympathy, no desire to relieve us. Relations, friends, neighbours, fellow-creatures, whatever term includes in it any notion of regard, is to us utterly perished. There is One still at the right hand of God ; but He sits no longer to intercede, but to judge. The only words that proceed from Him are the eternal sentence—‘ Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.’

This, we say, will surely happen to some of us. Let each then suppose it to be his own case. We say, too, that some of us will be believers at the last : it will not be injurious to us to try to connect this notion also, each of us, with ourselves. Hope is as allowed a motive as fear : nay, it is one which God would far rather employ upon us.

But in the portion of the believer, the greatest and most blessed point is one which only a believer can well conceive of,—the being allowed to be with Christ, and to know God. Other and lower points we can all fancy. Absence of pain and fear,—absence of all unkindness, of all falsehood,—the being surrounded by loving hearts,—the making happy, and being made happy perpetually. But the crown of all the rest, the Christian's hope, the Christian's inheritance,—this none but a Christian can long for. He only who has listened long and obediently to the voice of God's Spirit, can truly desire to know God as He is. He only who has thought of Jesus often, who has believed on Him, trusted in Him, loved Him, followed Him, can truly long for that moment when he shall see Him, and hear Him, and be with Him for ever.

Yet even they who can least feel this, can bring home to themselves the notion of some part of the joy of believing at last, as they can the misery of not believing at last. It is this which will make us anxious to be believers *now*. It is this which will make us, when the congregation is broken up, still follow after the words which we had heard while we were together. May it make us each and all do so! what has been spoken here we shall *now* hear, each of us, in very different places, and with very different congregations. But it is the same word of life leading to the same Saviour; and when we meet again,—as many of us as shall meet to form again the same congregation within these same walls,—may it be with hearts that have retained the impression of God's word spoken before, and ready to increase the impression every time that they shall hear it again!

RUGBY CHAPEL:

December 13, 1835.

[End of the Half Year.]

SERMON XXV

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES.

2 PETER iii. 15, 16.

Account that the long suffering of our Lord is salvation ; even as our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you ; as also in all his Epistles, speaking in them of these things ; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

LEAVING out of sight for the present all other points contained in these verses, I would wish now to confine myself to two ;—the divine wisdom here ascribed to the Epistles of St. Paul generally, and the difficulty spoken of as existing in some particular parts of them,—a character which some, we might imagine, have been almost tempted to reverse : as if the general character of St. Paul's writings was difficulty, and only some particular passages were full of that wisdom which tends to edify God's people.

‘Our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you.’ According to that wisdom which God had given him, that he should fully make known to the Gentiles all the revelation of God. First he spoke according to this wisdom, and taught by word of mouth ; but afterwards he wrote according to it, that the wisdom might not die with him and his first hearers, nor be trusted to the handing down of others,

who not having it in themselves, could not well appreciate it, but would be sure to corrupt it by some additions or alterations of their own; but that it might be kept safe and pure through the course of ages, as fresh and perfect for us as at the time when it was first delivered.

He wrote according to it fourteen Epistles; for although the Greek words of the present text of the Epistle to the Hebrews may not be his own, yet the wisdom of it is no doubt his; and no one has ever supposed but that it was written at least by one of those who went about with him,—Luke or Silas, or Apollos or Clement. Now then, taking these fourteen Epistles and dividing them according to the order of time in which they were written, we find, first, the two Epistles to the Thessalonians, then those to the Corinthians, and that to the Romans,—all written before that journey to Jerusalem, and the beginning of that long imprisonment first at Cæsarea and afterwards at Rome, of which we heard in the second lesson of this morning. Then come the Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and to Philemon, written during his imprisonment at Rome. And thirdly, we have the two Epistles to Timothy, and that to Titus, written at a period later than the history in the Acts reaches down to; that is, between the end of St. Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, and his death. The date of the remaining two Epistles, those to the Galatians and to the Hebrews, it does not seem possible to fix with certainty.

This is the division of St. Paul's Epistles according to the order of time; and this is one very important division of them, because by thus considering the different states of the church at which they were written, we understand their object better, and can see why some things are more dwelt on in some of them, and others in others.

Another very important division of them is according

to their subject, whether general or particular; and in this division the Epistles to the Romans, Ephesians, and Colossians are to be put as one class, and the other eleven Epistles as belonging to another class. What I mean is this that the Epistle to the Romans was written to a church of which St. Paul as yet knew nothing personally, and is sent as a general view of what Christianity was, and what practice should naturally flow from its principles. And the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians seem to have been of the nature of circulars; for the Colossians are directed to pass on the Epistle directed to them to the church at Laodicea, and to get in return the Epistle from Laodicea,—that is, in all probability, our Epistle to the Ephesians; which, having been sent on from Ephesus to other places, had come to Laodicea, and was from thence to be forwarded immediately to Colosse. Thus both these Epistles are quite of a general character, containing, like that to the Romans, only on a smaller scale, a general view of Christian principles and practice, not more fitted to one church than to another.

On the other hand, all the other eleven Epistles are more or less particular. That to Philemon is written to an individual about a private affair, his slave Onesimus having fled from him to Rome, and being sent back to him by Paul. Those to the Thessalonians and Philippians, seem like the overflowing of the apostle's affection towards two churches for which he appears to have felt an unusual degree of regard. Those to Timothy and Titus are addressed to persons in a particular office, and are commonly termed the Pastoral Epistles, as containing directions for Christian pastors or ministers. That to the Galatians, and the first to the Corinthians, were occasioned by reports which St. Paul had received of certain faults in those two churches, or are an answer to questions which had been specially put to him by those to whom he writes. The

second to the Corinthians was also occasioned by a particular circumstance,—the collection that was making amongst them for the benefit of the Christians at Jerusalem. And lastly, the Epistle to the Hebrews is principally taken up with showing how the priesthood and ceremonies of the law were fulfilled in Christ, and therefore were no longer to be retained as a matter of religion.

This also is a most important division; for it teaches us where the apostle is giving a general view of Christianity, and where he is dwelling on some particular point or points in it; and prevents us therefore from being surprised if we do not find all those things which we deem important insisted on in every Epistle. And further, by some of the Epistles being general, and others particular, we have a double advantage. We have on the one hand a complete view of the Gospel as a general guide to us all; and then we have also particular lessons for more particular duties and situations, such as may often occur again, and for which a mere general picture of Christianity would hardly contain all the instruction which we require.

One thing further may be observed, in which Paul, by the wisdom given to him, has done yet more for our benefit. From his habit of being frequently led away by some particular word to leave his immediate subject for that contemplation of Christ's gospel in all its fulness, which was the subject ever nearest his heart, it has happened that, even in an Epistle written upon some particular subject,—I had almost said, upon a matter of business,—we have the most full and beautiful general views of the whole of Christianity. For instance, nowhere do we meet with fuller statements concerning our Christian hopes after death, concerning our forgiveness for Christ's sake, and our having to stand before His judgment, than in the fourth and fifth chapters of the Second Epistle to the

Corinthians. Yet these, with the third chapter also, all arise out of a particular and personal matter, namely, his not having come to Corinth at the time that he had first purposed ; a circumstance which had been laid hold of by his enemies, as proceeding either from fickleness or from a distrust of his own authority ; and which leads him therefore to uphold the dignity of his ministry, and to contrast it with the humiliations and distresses to which himself and others engaged in it were continually exposed. And then, when thinking of these, he goes on in the fulness of his heart to enlarge upon that eternal hope and love which supported him under them. So that, in fact, the very portion of the second Epistle to the Corinthians, which is perhaps to us most valuable, is, with respect to the particular object of the epistle, no more than a digression.

But in considering what St. Paul, by the wisdom given unto him, has left for our benefit, one point must not be left unnoticed. That divine wisdom is shown, not only in what he has written, but in what he has not written. Here is the great contrast between him and those Christian writers whom we call the Fathers. They, holding the truths which St. Paul has taught, have left us those same truths,—all the truths of Christ's Gospel,—put forth with great earnestness, and sometimes with great beauty. His hopes, his faith, his love unfeigned, may be seen often in their pages, assuring us that the same Spirit of holiness and love who had done so much for Paul, had filled their hearts also ; that they were partakers with him of the same promises, and were servants of the same Master. But what they did not partake of, was that spirit of wisdom which was given to Paul far more for our sakes than for his own, because his words were to be our guide for ever. Therefore in him there is not only all Christian truth, but it is free from the mixture

of human foolishness and error. In his Epistles all is equal; all is grave and sober, and wise and true; all is fitted to be an authority and a rule. Whereas in those Christian writers who came after him, we find immediately the necessary mixture of human error: unwise sayings, hasty judgments, fanciful and exaggerated notions, occur in the same writer, in the same writing, in the same page, with the words of Christian truth and wisdom. There is much to admire in these writers, much to love; but because of this mixture of error, they are not fitted to be an authority. The distinction is of immense importance, and one without which they cannot be read with advantage: while, on the other hand, he who amidst the goodness and the sense of the Fathers is grieved from time to time at those marks of human infirmity which make it clear that they are no staff to lean upon, he may turn with greater thankfulness to the Epistles of St. Paul and of the other Apostles, and may there find that which the human heart so eagerly craves for,—an authority which it may trust without reserve.

And this brings me to the last division of my subject. How can those writings be an authority, it may be asked, in which are some things hard to be understood, and which may be wrested even to our destruction? They may indeed be so wrested by ‘the unlearned and unstable,’ as the other Scriptures are also wrested; as every good gift of God has been, is, and will be. But why need we be ‘unlearned and unstable’? for ‘unlearned’ does not here mean those who have not read many books, not got much of what is commonly called ‘learning’: another ignorance is here spoken of,—that ignorance which St. Paul meant, when he said, ‘Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is;’ or, again, when he charged the Colossians ‘to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.’ If we know nothing of God and duty, or if we are

for ever wavering in our principles and practice, St. Paul's Epistles, the words of Christ Himself, all may be wrested to our harm. More especially the particular passages which St. Peter no doubt had in view, when he spoke of 'things hard to be understood.' For he doubtless meant that part of St. Paul's doctrine which St. James had heard so much misrepresented, his doctrine of justification by faith without the deeds of the law. Wrested indeed this doctrine has been by many, at different ages of the Church; but only by the 'unlearned and unstable,' by those who knew not God and Christ, or who followed them wavering and with a double heart; by those who knew not what sin is, or, if they knew, did not feel it. Not the unlearned, in the common sense of the term; not the simple readers who with little of outward help go to St. Paul's Epistles for the words of comfort and of instruction;—they are not the persons who have wrested to their destruction his most true and most holy doctrine. When they read that they are justified by faith without the deeds of the law, they know well the merciful meaning of the words, that they can be, and are, forgiven when they come to Christ, even though in their deeds they are most unworthy of His acquittal. They feel that these words are spoken for the penitent; but he is no penitent who does not hate his sins, and in his heart cast them from him. They know that to whom much is forgiven the same will love much; but that if there be a nature so base as to be moved by this free forgiveness not to love, but to a bolder ingratitude,—that having been forgiven, he will therefore sin the more presumptuously,—then St. Paul tells him, that thus building again the sins which were destroyed, he makes himself a transgressor, and that for such wilful and obstinate sin there is no second sacrifice: he was once freely justified, but forasmuch as he incurred obstinately a new account of

guilt, he will be judged according to his deeds, and certainly condemned.

This is what the simple reader draws from St. Paul's Epistles; whilst the unlearned and unstable, those whom the Scripture calls 'fools,'—a term never applied by it to the innocent deficiencies of the mere intellect, but to the moral errors and blindness of the heart,—they wrest them to their own destruction. But they wrest all Scripture also, and all God's gifts of every kind: 'To the impure and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled;' the evil is in themselves, and can only be removed by a change within. For those who are pure in heart, let them read St. Paul's Epistles earnestly; they will find, indeed, passages which they may not understand, but nothing which they can wrest to their harm: they may not have the key to all the treasures of his wisdom, but they will find enough to make them wise unto salvation, and nothing to hinder them in their progress.

RUGBY CHAPEL :

April 24, 1836.

SERMON XXVI.

THE EPISTLES TO THE CORINTHIANS.

1 CORINTHIANS viii. 2.

If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

THOSE who are acquainted with that delightful book, the Pilgrim's Progress,—and who is there who is not acquainted with it?—will recollect that the Pilgrim is described as carrying the volume of the Scriptures in his bosom; and that when he is in any difficulty he opens the book, and finds in it some passage suitable to his case. Now the meaning of this is, if it be not needless to explain what is so clear, that the Scriptures furnish every man with a guide to his practice; and that he who in every difficulty acts according to the principles which are to be found in the volume of Scripture, will be sure to act rightly. But many persons seem to have applied what is said of the Pilgrim Christian literally to themselves. They seem to think that if they literally open a Bible, and read whatever they happen to find there, that because it is a part of the Scripture it will therefore furnish them with the direction and comfort which they need. And agreeably with this notion, I have heard persons say that they studiously excluded from their minds all thought of the human writer, whether it was Paul, or John, or Isaiah, or David, and considered themselves to be reading only the words of God.

These 'things may indeed have a show of wisdom in will worship and humility,' as St. Paul says of another sort of superstition; but like that, they are really mischievous and unchristian, founded in error, and having error, or worse than error, for their fruit. If indeed we supposed that when we opened the Bible, God would so order it that we should always open it at the right place, that our looking into it, in short, would be accompanied with a perpetual miracle, then the practice would answer as well with us as the story represents it to have answered with the Pilgrim Christian. There the writer takes care to make his Pilgrim open his book at the right place; the passage which he finds is made to be the very one which his case requires. And most true is it that the Scripture does contain in every case what we want, if we know how to look for it; but the great wisdom which we need is this very thing, to know how to look for it aright. Now those who say that they try not to think of the human writer, whether it be Paul, or John, or David, or Isaiah, go the very way to prevent themselves from finding what they need. For Paul and John and David and Isaiah wrote to different persons, and these persons were in many respects unlike each other; so that what was said to some of them, would have been often of no use, and might even have been hurtful, to others. If then we do not consider who wrote the part of the Scripture that we are reading, or to whom it was written, or under what circumstances, we run a great risk of applying to our own case a medicine intended for cases of a different nature; and then, however good the medicine may be when properly used, yet we in our folly shall make it a poison rather than a cure.

This then is the knowledge which we want for every part of the Scriptures,—a knowledge of when, and by whom, and to whom, and for what purpose, it was written. This is what I may call the outward knowledge, the

knowledge which we must gain by reading or hearing, for which we want notes and expositions and sermons.

But then comes another sort of knowledge, without which the first is useless ; a knowledge not to be gained by reading, hardly by hearing ; a knowledge for which we may look in vain through commentaries and works of learned men, and which comes only by thinking and by prayer :—this is, the knowledge of ourselves. For to use the comparison which I used just before : suppose we know the nature of various medicines,—that this is good as a stimulant, that as an alterative ; such an one in cases of fever, another in paralytic affections, and so on ; yet still we should gain little by our knowledge, unless we knew whether our own case was one of fever or of paralysis, whether our state required to be stimulated or to be lowered. If the symptoms deceive us, and we form a wrong judgment here, our knowledge of the uses of the medicines avails us nothing ; they become our poison, and we die.

But in these matters we do not trust our own judgment ; we go to those who have a knowledge of bodily disorders, and ask them to prescribe for us. In the disorders of the body we have this resource, but it is not so with the disorders of the soul. There we must, generally speaking, judge for ourselves, and at our own peril. The symptoms of disorder here are often such as our own hearts alone are conscious of ; and we shrink from laying open our hearts to any eye but His who made them. Nay, even if we would, it is not always that we can do it without mischief ; it is not always that we can do it at all. We cannot always do it without mischief ; for to recall thoughts which passed through our minds almost without consciousness, is little better than to dwell upon our dreams. It is a morbid habit to be searching, as it were, into the very minutest operations of our minds, to be examining every particular

process within us,—how much did we assent to such and such a thought? how really did we form such and such a wish? in what exact portions did kindness, or the love of God, or selfishness, mix together to form the motives of such and such an action? And not only is it morbid to be doing this so constantly and carefully as would be required, if we would open our whole hearts to the eye of another, but I scarcely believe it to be possible. I doubt whether in making such a confession aloud to any human ear, any memory would be so exact, any impartiality so rigid, as to describe us exactly as we were. A slight exaggeration or a slight omission would alter the true effect of the whole picture; and the counsel which we should receive might in consequence lead us into error. It is as I said before; we must gain a true knowledge of ourselves by thinking and prayer. Feeling that we have to do with Him to whom all hearts are open, we know that He can well supply whatever our own memory fails to recall; that His infallible discernment can analyse our most complex motives, where we should but grow dizzy by the intenseness of the inquiry. Praying to Him to remove from us the veil of self-love, yet to save us also from the restlessness of nervous self-suspicion, and judging of ourselves in accordance with that prayer, not hastily or insincerely, yet not over-minutely, we shall see assuredly where our faults and dangers lie; and then, if we have that outward knowledge of the Scriptures of which I spoke before, we shall have all that is needed to enable us to apply for their remedies with a certainty of not applying in vain.

But this outward knowledge itself may seem more than persons in general can attain to. In its perfection no doubt it is, and more indeed than any one can attain to; for the materials do not exist out of which it could be gained. Like perfection in other things, it is more than we can expect to arrive at. But although this knowledge

of the Scriptures cannot be gained perfectly, yet it can be gained up to a great degree; and every step that we advance, we find that it abundantly repays us.

Now the words of the text afford an instance of what I mean; and it was this passage indeed, occurring in the lesson for this evening's service, which turned my attention to-day to this subject. The words are characteristic of the Epistles to the Corinthians, which amongst all St. Paul's writings are particularly valuable to persons of a certain turn of mind, and for this very reason are not so applicable to persons of a different description. We know that Corinth was a large city, with a great deal of communication with other countries, and an active state of knowledge existing within itself. The Corinthians were likely to be struck with the beauty of the Gospel morality, to admire its large and liberal views, embracing as it did all nations and ranks of men without distinction, and laying no stress upon outward ceremonies, such as they had seen the Jews so fondly attached to. But their habits and characters would lead them to take this view of Christianity alone, and to run wild upon it; whereas its other features,—its humility, its intense charity, and its self-denial,—they were very little inclined to value. Thus they readily understood that there could be nothing wrong in itself in eating any particular kind of food; that meats offered to an idol could not really differ from meats of any other sort. But the charity and self-denial which should accompany enlightened views, they had not learnt to practise. They had no thought of denying themselves for the benefit of persons less enlightened; being risen above superstition, they did not feel as they should have done for those who were superstitious, nor consider that if they could not enlighten them, they should at least be careful how they tempted them; that although ignorance was a bad thing, and a scrupulous and superstitious conscience was a great

misfortune, yet that it was far worse to act against conscience, however superstitious, than to obey it; and that if a man could not be persuaded to see no harm in eating meats offered to idols, it was doing him a great unkindness to tempt him to eat them by the force of example, and thus, in fact, to lead him to do what to him was wrong.

Again, whilst entering readily into what they heard of the liberty and glorious prospects of the Christian, they wanted the humility and soberness which should save them from running into the evils of fanaticism. The gifts of the Spirit, which they had received, were to be displayed without the cold restraints of order or usefulness; women having become heirs of the promises no less than men, why should they still retain in their public assemblies that old fashion of dress which directed them not to appear abroad unveiled, as if they were intruding beyond their own proper element? Again, the Lord's Supper was a Christian festival, a commemoration of their high privileges; let it then be celebrated with nothing but joy; the earth was the Lord's, and He had given the use of it to His redeemed children: they need not then fear to enjoy His gifts. Further still, there were not wanting some of those impatient aspirings of the intellect, which were the worst part of the old philosophy. To be immortal was a glorious prospect; but to rise again with a body,—not to be allowed to consider their outward body as the prison which kept in the pure spirit, and so to cast off upon it, away from their proper selves, the blame of all their evil,—this was what they could not endure. Even worse remained behind:—the liberty of Christianity freed the spiritual Christian from the yoke of the law; he was no more subject to the old restraints upon the free affections of the heart; fornication and incest were but names to describe phantoms of evil, in which there was no evil in

reality. Hence the one and the other of these sins were practised among them, as appears from the first Epistle, and were not only practised, but uncensured, and even defended.

To a people then of this sort, there was more need of that which might humble them than of any thing to encourage them more. They needed not to be told of the excellence of knowledge, but rather to be warned of its insufficiency when not accompanied by humility and charity; to be reminded, when they talked of their knowledge, that knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth; that if they allowed themselves to dwell on the satisfaction which Christianity had given to their intellects, on the clear views which it had afforded them of the divine nature, whilst others were sunk in the folly of heathenism, they should remember, ‘that if any man think that he knoweth anything in such matters, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to do; but if any man love God, the same is known of him:’—as much as to say, that to know God here intellectually is impossible: if we love Him, God will know and acknowledge us, and raise us to a state in which we may know Him even as we are known by Him. Again, when speaking of that reasoning by which they had persuaded themselves that sensual indulgences were no sin, the Apostle writes to them, ‘If any among you seemeth to be wise, let him become a fool that he may be wise; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God: for it is written, he taketh the wise in their own craftiness.’

Many more instances might be given in both the Epistles to the Corinthians, serving to set forth their peculiar character, and the peculiar addresses which it required from the Apostle. And the same thing might be done for others of the Epistles: showing how there is in them severally a separate character in the persons addressed, and, therefore, a separate tone and character in

the addresses to them : that thus they afford instances of divine remedies applied to a particular class of spiritual disorders. We may see the disposition, and the way in which that disposition is treated, and if we feel that ours is such an one, then this is a part of the Scripture which suits us particularly ; we should read it over and over again, for here is the wisdom of God for the curing of our own special infirmities. But this cannot be done within the limits of one single sermon ; it would rather be matter for a volume.

Only in conclusion now,—if any of us have powerful understandings, if we love truth heartily and follow it vigorously, if we have no sympathy with superstition, and little respect for authority, but require a reason for everything, and are willing to be bound with the fewest possible ties,—then the Epistles to the Corinthians are a part of Scripture which we shall find especially profitable. There will be in it enough of what is truly liberal and wise and manly ; there will be enough to gratify the loftiest hopes, the highest aspirations for an exalted hereafter. But there is preached withal, to the very extent of its power, the doctrine of Christ crucified ;—that doctrine which is of all others the most humbling and the most softening ; which is indeed the power of God and the wisdom of God ; but which speaks even more strongly of **His** holiness and of **His** love, that the thought of the one may lead us to an intense self-humiliation, the thought of the other may enkindle in us the most fervent and most affectionate love towards God and towards each other.

RUGBY CHAPEL : *Sept.* 23, 1832.

SERMON XXVII.

CHRISTIAN PROPHESYING.

1 CORINTHIANS xiv. 24, 25.

If all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

‘To prophesy,’ in the language of the Scripture, is ‘to speak the words of God,’ as opposed to speaking our own words from our own devices. It is manifest, therefore, that it admits of very great degrees; being applicable, in a low sense, to the uttering of any word of wisdom or goodness, inasmuch as all such words are the words of God, while in its highest sense it applies to Him only to whom the Spirit was given without measure, and whose words were in a perfect sense the words of God. Between this highest sense of the term and the lowest, there are other gradations,—according to the fulness and clearness of the knowledge of God’s will which is enjoyed in each particular case; but certainly, any minister of Christ speaking out of the Scriptures, and declaring to his brethren God’s will concerning them, may truly be said to prophesy: the lessons which he delivers are not his own, but those of God.

Whatever especial revelations, then, may have been given to those called prophets in the early Christian Church, what is said of them, and of their prophesying, is, in the main, applicable to us and to ours. The differ-

ences between them and us are not of so much consequence as the resemblance. Nor are we concerned now with another difference, although in itself of considerable importance,—that whereas in the Church to which St. Paul was writing, there were many in each congregation who prophesied, now with us there is only one. What we have to consider is the nature and effects of Christian prophecy; whether speaking from an immediate and particular revelation, or from a general one already existing and known; whether it be confined to one, or imparted to many. We are to consider its nature and effects, such as the Apostle has described them, at once so truly and so beautifully,—that it convinces,—that it judges,—that it makes manifest the secrets of the heart;—and that it at last urges the hearer of it to give himself up to God, and acknowledge that what he hears has God's authority.

Such is Christian prophesying; such it should be made, on the one hand, by those who utter it; on the other, by those who hear it.

First, we see that its nature is practical. Since the world began, God has spoken to man for one purpose only, to make him better. Wisdom He has spoken to him, words of divinest wisdom; but they belong to that wisdom only which purifies the heart, and so makes wise unto salvation. But when we say that Christian prophesying is practical, we must take care not to limit the meaning of the word practical, so as to take only half of its proper signification. We must not suppose that there is nothing practical except what is given in the form of a command or rule: 'Thou shalt not kill;' 'Honour thy father and mother;' 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;' and other such words. Everything is practical which is calculated to affect the practice; that most so which is calculated to affect it the most. If then there be a way of addressing us more fitted to affect our hearts and

lives than the way of precepts, rules, or commandments, that way may be justly called even still more practical. And it seems there is such a way : either by putting before us facts tending to awaken hope and fear, or such as address themselves to our affections. Not less practical, then, than the command to love the Lord our God with all our heart, is the truth declared by our Lord, that ‘in our Father’s house are many mansions,’ and that ‘He is gone to prepare a place for us;’ not less practical is His word, that ‘God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the intent that all who believe on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’

When I say, then, that Christian prophesying is practical, I do not at all mean that it should consist wholly of rules or precepts, for these are not the only, nor even the most powerful means of affecting the practice ; but that, whatever means it makes use of, it should always bear in mind that they are means, and that its end and object is the improvement of the heart and life. Thus it is most highly practical to dwell on the promises of eternal life, and the threats of eternal death ; to show, on the one hand, how much there is to hope, and on the other, how much to fear. But it is possible to treat of these things in a manner that shall make them not practical, but curious ; that shall leave on the mind not an impression of hope or of fear, but of amusement or interest offered to the imagination ; and then there is a departure from the true character of Christian prophesying, inasmuch as this does not tend to edifying. Or again, nothing can be more practical than to dwell on the love of God in Christ, on the most gracious promise that the Holy Spirit should abide with us for ever, that we might not be alone in the world with our own evil thoughts and desires, our temptations and our tempters. Yet how possible is it to speak of these things in a way that is not practical ; to

raise questions about the connection between Christ and the Father, between the Spirit and both : or again, to turn the promise of Christ's abiding Spirit into a source of metaphysical perplexities, into attempts to distinguish between God's work and man's work,—whether God's work can be resisted by us or no,—whether our own work is our own in any way, or not. Then, again, there is a departure from Christian prophesying ; for questions of words, questions that gender strifes, questions that perplex, that provoke the intellect to reason rather than the heart to love, may indeed have to do with the same subjects with which God's word has to do, but they are not themselves God's word, inasmuch as they do not minister to the edification of God's people ; and not being God's word, they are not the true language of Christian prophesying.

Having thus explained what is meant by the word 'practical,' a word often used vaguely and in an imperfect sense,—we may now follow St. Paul's description of the particular way in which prophesying is made practical ; namely, that it convinces, that it judges, that it lays open the secrets of the heart.

Christian prophesying convinces. By 'convincing' is meant overcoming an opposition, whether lurking only in the heart or expressed in words. This opposition consists in a desire to justify ourselves. God speaks to us as to sinners, calling on us to repent and be saved. We resist this call ; saying, or more often feeling, that we are not sinners ; that is, not in danger of God's punishment ; that we shall not be lost, even if we do not repent. This opposition must be convinced, must be overcome. It must be convinced, to use our Lord's own words, of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment : that we have sinned,—that we need to become righteous,—that we shall be judged. And this conviction is effected by showing, on the one hand, what God requires of us, and on the

other by appealing to what we have done. It is effected also mainly by appealing to Christ crucified; for if we were in no danger, or could have saved ourselves, why should Christ have died for us?

When we are convinced by Christian prophecy, then we are also judged by it. It speaks of God's judgments, and we feel that they belong to us; our conscience hears, as it were, the sentence already spoken, the sentence which declares that the soul which sinneth, it shall die.

Then are the secrets of our hearts made manifest;—it does not mean to others, but to ourselves. We gain a knowledge of our hearts which we never had before. The light has broken in upon us, and shines into every corner of that which before was darkened. Were we so evil, and we knew it not? in such danger, and we thought ourselves so safe? This needs looking to. The man arises, and searches his heart thoroughly, to see what evil it contains, and of what sort: what it is that has blinded his eyes thus long; what idols he has worshipped and is worshipping; on what his trust has been placed, which has not been placed on God. Wonderful is the degree of self-knowledge thus gained, and of consequent improvement. He sees his mind with all its weaknesses, and all its temptations. He says, 'My nature, I find, leads me to this fault; it is one which I must carefully watch against. My way of life exposes me to this temptation: it is here that I must especially pray for strength from God. Such a being I find myself;—so endowed, so ruined; with such promises before me, and such warnings; on my way to an eternal portion, yet walking with blinded eyes and shackled feet, so that I can neither see the right road, nor follow it with vigour.'

Then falling down on his face, the man whom you, prophets of Christ, have so convinced, so judged, so made the secrets of his heart manifest to him, he will worship

God, and confess that God is in you of a truth. He turns to Christ and to His salvation. He has found all that he needs. Here, and nowhere else, is God to be found ; here is His holiness, here is His power, here His wisdom, and here His love. He knows and feels that there is none other name given under heaven whereby he may be saved, but only the name of his Lord Jesus Christ. He confesses that this God is his God for ever and ever : He shall be his guide unto death.

This should be the effect of Christian prophesying : such it should be made by us and by you. Such it should be not once only, but perpetually ; once it may be with peculiar force and power, but not once for all. As often as we eat the bread, and drink the cup of Christ's communion, we do show the Lord's death till He come. So also, in all Christian prophesying, wherever any are gathered together in Christ's name, there the word spoken is of the Lord's death, and so it will be till He comes again. And why thus often,—why does Christian prophecy still speak the word of Christ crucified ; why does Christian communion show forth in its solemn act and deed the same truth ? It is because we ever need it. Not once only at the beginning of our Christian course, as if from that time forward we should have no more to do with Christ crucified, but only with Christ risen ; as if conviction of sin, insight into our heart's secrets, falling down before Christ in joyful penitence, were for one point of our lives only ; to be never needed again, or if needed never gained. They are always needed ; they may always be gained. As sin steals upon us, and our hearts have hardened, so we again need to be convinced and judged. As self-deceit has blinded us, so we again need to have the secrets of our hearts made manifest ; as we have walked coldly with Christ, so we again need to fall down on our face before Him, and own Him for our only Lord and

God. It does not follow that we should have utterly gone back from Him; it is enough that we have walked coldly and carelessly, and therefore need to be awakened,—need to be reminded of His death, which none can ever keep steadily in his mind and at the same time live coldly and unthankfully.

This we are to bring home to ourselves, from Christian prophesying and from Christian communion. Our word is not God's word if it be not fitted to minister such thoughts to you; and if it be so fitted, and yet fails to excite them, then see if there be not a fault in you. I do not mean that Christ's death should immediately be the subject of all our prophesyings, or should be directly brought to your minds by your own receiving of them. But if our words serve to edification, they will bring you to Christ's death sooner or later; for all feelings of true self-knowledge, of repentance, of confidence, and of devotion, must lead to the cross of Christ. Our words fail, either through our fault, or through yours, if they do not lead you to look into yourselves, if they do not in some degree convince, judge, open to you the state of your hearts, and dispose you from the knowledge so gained to seek after salvation; that is, to come to Christ crucified. The first impression may have nothing to do with Christ; it may be only one of general seriousness, of a disposition to consider your ways, and look into your hearts and conduct. And this is a good and wholesome impression,—a work of Christ's Spirit,—though as yet He has not wrought it in Christ's name. But if followed up, it will and must lead to Christ; and if it does not, then it will be sure to fade away, and to end in nothing.

If any of you has received this word as God's word, as Christian prophesying, then it will convince him and judge him; it will make him feel that all is not right with him, that inquiry into his own heart is wanted. Let him so

inquire ; let him search it carefully, and find out its weaknesses, and pray to God to pardon him and to strengthen him, and turn with faith unfeigned to Jesus Christ, in whom he will find both pardon and strength. And then, needing as he will do the pledge of pardon and of strength sure and perfect, let him draw near next Sunday to the holy communion ; and in showing forth the death of Christ, let him receive them both to his soul's salvation.

RUGBY CHAPEL : *May* 31, 1835.

SERMON XXVIII.

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT.

1 CORINTHIANS xii. 14.

The body is not one member, but many.

THE chapter from which these words are taken, the lesson for this evening's service, is one of those passages in St. Paul's epistles, the wisdom and profit of which are most inexhaustible, and yet have been most neglected. Nor is this to be wondered at, when we know how little able men are to go beyond the letter for any good and wise purposes, however fondly they may depart from it in the way of fancy and superstition. Now this chapter speaks of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as they were enjoyed in the early church; and as these gifts have long since ceased, it may seem to those who follow the letter of a rule without entering into its spirit, that the directions given with regard to these gifts have ceased to be of importance also. Whereas it is manifest that a moral rule applies to the reason of a case, and not to the particular form which it may happen to wear in any one age or country. And thus, as St. Paul's rule here is a moral one, and teaches us how we should act and feel with respect to God's gifts, it matters not that the particular gifts to which it is actually applied in the Epistle to the Corinthians are no longer in existence, if we know that other gifts of God are in existence, which, like those spoken

of by the Apostle, may either be used or abused ; may either excite in us good feelings or the contrary.

Now, first of all, the gifts of the Holy Spirit were given according to His will. ‘He divideth to every man severally as He will.’ This is one point. And again, these gifts were not the greatest perfection of a man’s nature ; he might have the very highest of them, and yet perish everlastingly ; ‘Covet earnestly the best gifts ; and yet show I unto you a more excellent way ; for though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge ; and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.’ This is another point. Thirdly, these gifts were given to enable him who had them to do good to others ; ‘The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.’ This is a third point.

Now then, if there are any gifts of God now enjoyed by us, in which all these three points are to be found : gifts given according to God’s free pleasure ; gifts which we may have in the highest measure and yet perish ; but at the same time, gifts which may enable us to do good to others, and therefore are highly valuable and earnestly to be coveted,—then St. Paul’s rules, with regard to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, are applicable to us now.

It is most evident that there are such gifts ; and that we all are, more or less, partakers of them. Nay, so close an analogy exists between what we call the course of nature, that is, the course of God’s ordinary providence, and the dispensation of grace, that is, the course of His special providence, that it might be possible to go through the several gifts mentioned by the Apostle, and to find for each of them some strictly corresponding gift in God’s dealings with us now. Yet, lest we should be driven into any thing like extravagance by so insisting on this paral-

lel as to fancy a resemblance beyond reality, it will be better simply to notice what are, beyond question, God's gifts to us now ; as freely given, as capable of being made useful, as capable also of being separated from that holiness which alone shall see God, as were the gifts of the church of Corinth.

Consider for a moment ; let each of us think within himself whether he has not some power, some talent, some taste, some advantage of one sort or another, in which he feels that his main strength lies ; something particularly capable of improvement, and which beyond other points in him, would reward the care spent on its cultivation. Perhaps some may doubt this, from being accustomed to confine the notion of God's gifts to something which they consider very high and important : they would never dream of carrying it down to little things. Yet what is the Apostle's comparison : 'those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary ; God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked.' I may safely use these words, as confirming what our reason will show us, if we apply to it, that God is the author and giver of the least of our gifts, faculties, tastes, talents, and advantages, no less than of what we call the highest.

Bearing this in mind, and extending as widely as possible the notion that all that we have comes from God, these three great points form St. Paul's rule for us to follow :—that every gift is a means of good ; that no gift extends to our highest spiritual good ; that we should value every gift, however humble, and not despise our neighbour because his gift is not the same as ours. These are the great points of St. Paul's lesson, which we may now proceed to consider particularly, each in its order.

I. Every gift is a means of good. It is easy to moralize, as has been done very strikingly and beautifully by various writers, on the vanity of human wishes, in being

anxious for wealth, for talents, for beauty, for influence ; things which so often tend to the ruin of their possessor rather than to his good. This has been truly said ; for the very fact of over-anxiously desiring these things, or of desiring them at all without desiring something better,—even that grace of God which keeps all our life and being in healthful order,—is a sign that we shall use them amiss. But God gives to some these gifts, and to others other gifts ; in many cases without their wishing for them at all. A healthy constitution, a strong understanding, a vigorous body, quick senses, acute and accurate tastes, the inheritance of a competent fortune, or of a noble name,—these are given without our searching, given before we were able to search, given at our first entrance into the world, or at any rate before our own exertions could at all determine our own destiny. But there are gifts also to be traced, not only in faculties granted, but in sensibilities withheld. There are constitutions of mind and body so acutely sensible to things painful, whether physically or morally, that to them certain situations and duties in life are almost necessarily closed ; their nature would sink under the effort which strove to force it to endure them. Then there come the mass of mankind, not feeling this pain so overwhelmingly, but yet feeling it strongly ; to whom the endurance of particular callings would be, if not an impossible effort, yet a great one : necessity alone could urge them to make it. But beyond these, there are persons also whose nature scarcely feels this pain at all ; who without distress to themselves can witness scenes most repulsive to many natures, and who are thus enabled to do great good. Who will deny that this less sensitive nature is a gift, as well as the more sensitive one ? gifts given, it is true, for different purposes, and leading to different lines of duty, but both given to us to profit withal ; to do good to our Christian brethren.

This instance will be sufficient to show what I mean :

that every faculty, or talent, or taste, or advantage which we may possess, is capable of ministering to the good of others in some way or other, and that for this very purpose it was given to us. And I believe that it would be very difficult to find out any person who had not thus his own gift, and who was not capable, in some way or other, of benefiting or pleasing his neighbours in some especial manner.

II. It is most clear that gifts of this sort, whether of the highest kind or of the humblest, do none of them imply our highest spiritual good. St. Paul speaks of one bestowing all his goods to feed the poor, and yet being nothing if he had no charity. It may be asked, how can the giving our goods to feed the poor be called a gift, when it seems rather to be a grace. The answer is, because the giving to the poor here spoken of, appears to be connected with one of the offices in the church, that of the deacon or minister. It would be possible for a man to have in a high degree the gift of ministration, if I may so speak,—great activity, great interest in his office as such, and therefore great readiness to make personal sacrifices to a very large extent to promote its objects,—and yet not to have a pure and humble and generally loving spirit towards God and man, in matters not connected with his office. And so it might be now. Activity, love of business, love of doing well what we are well fitted to do, might make a man most highly useful in his generation; he might know his gift and improve it; but yet it is very possible that he might value the gift more than the Giver, and so might never seek for that state of heart towards God and man, which, being an abandonment of self and a submission of our gifts, together with all other things, to Him who gave them, is alone the state of the children of God; that is, of the heirs of life eternal.

III. We should value every gift, however humble, and

not despise our neighbour because his gift is not the same as ours. St. Paul's comparison, drawn from the human body, is as just as it is striking. If we were ever allowed to despise any one, it should be those alone who did not improve their gifts, or who, while neglecting what they had, foolishly aspired after such as were denied them. But the world of providence,—that is, the society of men,—and the world of grace,—that is, the Church or society of Christians,—are alike formed out of various elements, and would alike be spoiled by uniformity. It is a well-known fable, that gold itself, the most precious of things, when made by its foolish possessor the only thing around him, punished his folly with death. He was starved, because he would fain have every thing gold. So would society perish, if there were no gifts of God but such as are accounted most precious; if there were no faculties but the rarest and loftiest, no tastes but the most refined. Let any of us who is inclined to value himself most, consider the gifts which he has not, the things which he cannot do, the services to society which he cannot render. Would that all persons, that all classes, and all divisions of men of whatsoever sort, would remember this practically. It is not a dream of fantastic equality, which would pretend that all gifts are equal, that all services should be honoured alike; that is not so; in the natural body we may value our sight above all our senses; we would gladly sacrifice other members rather than lose our eyes. This is well; but it is true, also, that the eye cannot supply the place of a limb, or of the smallest part of a limb; it cannot do the work of the limb, any more than the limb can do its work; and by the loss of that limb there is a loss to the body which not its noblest faculties can repair. Even so common sense has spoken in the social body, that there are some faculties more precious than others, less to be spared, and more highly to be

honoured. Yet there is that which these most precious faculties cannot do; there are benefits to society which the loftiest mind may be unable to render, and which may be done by the stronger body of the rudest.

So beautifully is this our social body knit together; so variously are we gifted that we may supply each other's wants. But the same Apostle who has used this comparison, and who has compared the society of Christians to the natural body of a single man, has also carried it further, and added one point more which we may not omit to notice. He calls us a body, of which Christ is the Head. We have relations to one another, we may render services to one another, but there is a yet higher relation in which we all stand to Him; and it is only when this relation is acknowledged and acted upon that the body goes on healthfully. He is the Head of us all, of the greatest and of the humblest. Have we a high station, great influence, great powers?—yet what are we to that perfect Man who is our Head? What are our faculties, what the value of our best services, when we think of His infinity? Can we do but little, are our powers very humble, our means very small, our opportunities of doing good next to nothing; are we very young or very old, very sick or very poor; are we such as society would scarcely miss, whose place a thousand seem ready to fill?—yet we are no less members of the body of Him who filleth all in all; and He values us and loves us with an infinite love, and prizes our souls so deeply, that He gave His own life to save them. So in Him we each shall find according to our need; humiliation, if we are exalted in our own strength; exaltation, if we are humbled in our own weakness.

The state of union with one another, and with Christ,—of feeling ourselves to be, in St. Paul's words, the body

of Christ, and severally members one of another,—is the perfection of a Christian life; it is that perfect communion of which the outward sign is the act of communion at the Lord's table. For that body of Christ of which they who worthily communicate at that table become partakers, is and can be only His spiritual body; that body of which He is the Head, redeemed by the offering of His natural body once for all, and now so united to Him, that whoso is a partaker of it partakes of Him, and truly belongs to Him. It were then to separate what He hath made one, to look upon the communion of the Lord's Supper as a mere act between Christ and our single selves, as if we alone were or could be His body. Rather is it our communion with Christ in all His fulness; the being joined heart and soul into the fellowship of His body, and so as He himself expresses, the being one in Him and in His Father.

Therefore we go thither to increase our love to one another as well as to Him. We go thither to learn the feelings that become His members: sympathy and kindness towards each other, a desire to minister to each other's good and to His glory, by the use of all the gifts which He has given us. So indeed would there be no division in His body, no unkindness, no neglect, no pride; but all would care for one another, and value one another; and all, whilst improving to the utmost their own gifts, and honouring those of their neighbours, would have found out also that more excellent way of which St. Paul speaks; the way of love towards God and man; the way, in short, to express it in the highest possible language, of communion with Christ's body.

RUGBY CHAPEL: *September 27, 1835.*

SERMON XXIX.

EXCITEMENT.

EPHESIANS v. 18, 19.

Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess ; but be filled with the Spirit ; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

ON the first reading of these words, it may not be evident to every one what is the connection between the first part of them and the second, between the command not to be drunken with wine, and the bidding them to be filled with the Spirit. When we begin to think, however, about it, we shall recollect that when the Spirit first descended on the day of Pentecost, some of those who saw its effects said mockingly, ‘These men are full of new wine;’ and when we consider it a little more, we shall see that the direction of the Apostle in the text relates to that which in this generation is even more familiar than it was of old ; to that which, varying in form, is yet in one shape or other universally acceptable, and is found to be one of the greatest of human pleasures,—I mean, excitement. The Apostle notices one sort of evil excitement, the lowest certainly, but one of the most common of all ; and on the other hand he notices one sort of good and wholesome excitement, not indeed the most common of all, yet the best and purest.

Let us first see what we mean by excitement; a term which may not be quite clear to all of us, or at least our notions may not be distinct about it, though we may understand its meaning generally. Now here, if we understood our nature perfectly, we might perhaps be able to describe what excitement properly speaking is, how it is caused, and on what part of our system it acts. But, as in so many other instances, the imperfections of our knowledge oblige us to be content with much less than this; we cannot do more than describe excitement by its effects. To speak generally, that is excitement which interrupts our quiet and ordinary state of mind with some more lively feeling; which makes us live more consciously, and in a manner quicker, than we do in common. This more lively life, if I may so speak, is pleasant universally, or almost universally; but the nature of the excitement, or rather the things which are capable of exciting different classes of men, and different individuals, are of course exceedingly different. Highly agreeable and intellectual society, which to some is one of the most exciting things in the world, is to others one of the least so; and the same may be said of poetry and of music. But whatever does excite us, also pleases us; and the pleasure, or at any rate the craving, grows with the indulgence; whence arises the known difficulty of persuading a confirmed drunkard to leave off his habit of drinking. Life is so insupportable to him when robbed of its excitement, that he cannot persuade himself to abandon his propensity, although knowing its sin and its danger.

The direction of the Apostle in the text bids us choose that excitement which is good and healthy, instead of that which is bad and mischievous. And, as I said before, the command which was needful in his days is even more so now. I do not mean, indeed, with regard

to the particular excitement of drunkenness ; for although that was not, probably, a very general vice in those days amongst the inhabitants of a warm climate, yet neither is it in our rank of society general amongst us now. And comparing our own country, and the richer classes in it especially, with what they were forty or fifty years ago, we shall find that there is much less danger from this temptation now than formerly ; in fact, in the ordinary state of things, it can hardly be called a danger at all.

But the increase of other sorts of excitement has more than kept up with the decrease of this. The whole state of society is more exciting ;—the great inventions which have been made in various ways enable men to do more than they could formerly, and in a much less time ; that is, they enable them to live at a quicker rate ; they also multiply pleasures, and put them more within our reach, thus accustoming us the more to crave for them. And in books this is exceedingly striking. We have heard of the story of that Grecian king who ordered a magnificent Persian feast to be served up side by side with the simple meal of his own countrymen, to contrast the luxury of the one with the plain and frugal habits of the other. So if we could place side by side the books which formed a boy's entertaining reading thirty or forty years ago, with those which are within his reach now, the difference would not be less extraordinary. Those whose experience does not reach so far back would hardly believe how simple was the feast, so to speak, which was set before their fathers, when compared with the variety and the richness of that which they now enjoy.

All this is not without its effect, nor can it be. The mind early begins to lose the keenness of its wonder, because it is so early made acquainted with such a variety of objects. Forty years ago, the probability would have been, that out of a number of persons of the age of those

who now hear me, very few would have travelled further than from their own homes to school, and all else would have been new to them. But now the exception would probably be of those who had not seen more than this; in most cases it would be much the contrary. Thus, manhood is in various ways anticipated in youth. Much that used to strike the mind at twenty, or five and twenty, with all the freshness of novelty, is now become familiar to it before that period; there is, therefore, a craving for something more; and it seems difficult to conceive what will be the effect twenty or thirty years hence, when those who have been brought up amidst all this excitement shall have passed the prime of life, and shall have exhausted in forty years more than those sources of interest which used formerly, under a more sparing distribution of them, to last out for our threescore years and ten.

Again, with regard to that low excitement spoken of in the text, the course to be taken is sufficiently plain. 'Be not drunk with wine;'—abstain, as you may do, from a vice so degrading and so fatal. But how can we say, 'Be not led away by the excitement of our present state of society?' How is it possible for you to escape it? Is it not around you on every side? And with regard to books in particular, would it be wise, even if it were practicable, to advise you to content yourselves with such as amused your fathers? Here, then, is an excitement, of doubtful character indeed, yet still inevitable. The world is moving at a quicker pace, and we cannot help moving on with it. Yet two things we can do; the one to watch ourselves amidst this worldly excitement, and not allow ourselves to move faster than we must; the other to have recourse betimes, to begin early, and to go on late, with that other and divine excitement of which the Apostle speaks, and whose virtue, alike to kindle, to

strengthen, and to soothe, keeps pace by Christ's appointment with the increased activity of what is of doubtful character, or of evil.

And first, let us watch ourselves amidst this worldly excitement, and not allow ourselves to move faster than we must. In this respect our studies here greatly help us. For as it were foolish to bid you live out of your own time, and not to avail yourselves of its inventions and activity, so it is the happiness of our employments here that they hinder us from living in our own time exclusively. They acquaint us and oblige us to become familiar with a calmer and simpler beauty, with a less pretending and excited wisdom than that of our own age. And what the studies of this place do for us, we may also now and hereafter do for ourselves. We may, and should, always temper the draught of modern interests, and tastes, and passions, with the cooling and sobering study of those of past times. In this way it is possible to partake of the activity of the present without catching its feverishness; our very taste will shrink from what is over-exciting, as the healthy appetite shrinks from over-luxuriousness of living in matters of food. Again,—although this undoubtedly is harder to practise,—yet those who are entering upon life may in other ways also temper and moderate the vehemence of their progress. It may not be needful, or far less needful than formerly, to say, ‘Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess;’ but it is quite needful to warn against excesses of other kinds. I do not speak of things absolutely sinful, but of things over-exciting. Excess of bodily exercise, to which consciousness of strength often tempts us; excess of intellectual exercise, whether in reading or in society, to which we are no less tempted by a consciousness of power of mind; excess even in our hours;—for though it seems a little thing to speak of, yet it is really not so; and the habit of sitting

up during a great part of the night is essentially injurious, let the hours thus unnaturally gained be employed as they will. I well know that to all these things there are abundant temptations; but do you suppose that, forty or fifty years ago, the temptations were less to the grosser excitement of drunkenness? And if every one would say that it would have been our duty then to struggle against that temptation, shall we not confess also that it is our duty to strive against those temptations of our own days, wherein there is excess also, though of another kind; excess and excitement opposed to that happiest of all tempers, the temper of Christian sober-mindedness?

But most of all, while we strive to lessen our worldly excitement, let us begin early and go on late with that divine excitement of which there is no fear of drinking in over-measure. I am not forgetting the evils of fanaticism; but is the spirit of fanaticism indeed the Spirit of God; and is not the Spirit of God as truly a spirit of peace and wisdom as it is a spirit of love and of power? Truly we need put no caution, no restraint, on the Apostle's command, 'Be ye filled with the Spirit.' Study the things of God in their depth and in their simplicity, and then see how they realize that seemingly impossible problem, at once to excite and soothe.

I spoke of exhausting subjects of human interest,—of having accustomed our taste and feelings to such varied indulgences from early years, that ere the vigour of manhood was over they would have lost all healthful activity, and crave the strongest excitements to awaken them. But who can ever exhaust the subjects of eternal interest? Who has come to the end of the goodness of God? Who has sounded the depths of His wisdom, or drained to the bottom the cup of His love? Enter life as Christians, and you need not fear lest the world should hurry you on too rapidly. There is much to learn, much to admire, much

to enjoy, and much to do. Vast powers are at work, vast results producing ; do not despise them, nor yet fear them. Walk amidst them, study them, use them ; you will not be carried away with their intoxication ; for on the one hand you see also what there is in them of weakness and of unworthiness, whilst you see and know what is hid from other eyes,—the workings of a far greater power, results a thousand times more wonderful ;—good brought out of evil,—good triumphing amidst evil, and over it,—self subdued,—God glorified,—Christ's kingdom advanced in man's salvation. Never at any time, since the Gospel was first preached to mankind, were its peculiar qualities better fitted to the peculiar evils of the world. It raised and excited an age of barbarism : it is no less able to excite and to tranquillize an age of the highest civilization. For let the human mind go on as far as it will, and the wisdom of the Gospel still expands before it, satisfying its highest refinement, as it humbled itself to its greatest ignorance. But whilst giving a perpetual interest to life, it is also perpetually soothing, because it calls us to those thoughts and to those quiet and humble actions which must be sobering ; which must stay the vehemence of our feelings, and give us intervals of rest and of peace.

But who can be thus filled with the Spirit, unless he seek the appointed mean of gaining it ? In comparing the reading of the present generation with that of their fathers, I cannot but think that amongst the higher classes of society the Scriptures are less familiarly known than they were formerly, in those cases where religion has been really attended to. There were more instances of utter ignorance and carelessness in former times ; but where there was a serious mind, and a religious education, I am not sure whether the Bible was not more familiarly known than it is in similar instances now. But be this as it may, it is at least certain that very many who are in earnest,

and who serve God in Christ Jesus, are yet so far deficient in their knowledge of the Scripture, that its various stores for counsel, for encouragement, for warning, are not enough at their command ; they go out into the world, knowing some other things better. This, however, should not be so ; it is not well to be more familiar with anything than with the word of life and truth. This should be our most complete knowledge, as it is our best ; and thus only will the Gospel be found to answer as fully to our intellectual wants, as we know it to answer to our moral wants, even when our knowledge of it is far less perfect.

RUGBY CHAPEL : *June* 28, 1835.

SERMON XXX.

WILLS.

COLOSSIANS iii. 17.

Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

THIS is one of those passages in the Scripture which are quite familiar to the ears of us all; which we receive as a good and holy command, but which, I think, we seldom follow up into its real meaning, or rather into that multitude of lessons for our daily life which lie wrapped up as it were within it. One great business of Christian preaching, as it seems to me,—of preaching, I mean, as a part of our Church service, in distinction from the prayers and psalms, and the reading of the Scriptures,—is to form the link between human things and divine: to form a bridge, so to speak, by which the truths taught and the feelings expressed in the other parts of the service may be joined on to the common business and common language of life, and not allowed to remain apart and unapplied; respected, indeed, but powerless. And this same thought is contained in the words of the text. The Apostle had been speaking of acts of direct religion. ‘Let the word of Christ,’ he says, ‘dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.’

And then he proceeds to speak of all the various acts of human life which are not in themselves acts of religion : ‘Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.’ That is, let all your actions and all your words be done and spoken as in Christ’s presence, and as done and spoken by His servants and His redeemed.

Many actions there are of our daily life which it would be curious to paint in what I may call their dead state and their living : first, I mean, describing any given action,—the choice of a profession or calling, the purchasing or selling of property, the contracting marriage, the engaging in a law suit, or any other of our more serious acts,—as done under the influence of our common and worldly feelings only ; and then describing the very same things as done in a Christian spirit, and with Christian resolutions and feelings ; or, in other words, as done in the name of the Lord Jesus. But there is one act which I would now wish to consider in this double form ; an act which ought, it would seem, to be all but an act of direct religion ; and yet which is many times done under the influence of worse motives than almost any other of a man’s life ; the act, I mean, of making a Will.

‘A testament or will,’ says the Epistle to the Hebrews, ‘is of force after men are dead.’ Therefore I said that it might seem to be properly all but an act of direct religion. For the very notion of our last will and testament implies the notion of our death ; what we write is absolutely written only for that time when we shall be no more in the land of the living. There is something exceedingly solemn in writing words which shall not be read till we can write and read no more ; in sealing a paper which shall not be opened till we are laid in our graves. And thus one would think that the bare thought of making our Will, the mere consciousness of writing and sealing

an instrument so full of death, if I may so speak, in every line, ought in itself to be the most impressive of sermons.

There is another thing in the act of writing a Will, not nearly so obvious as what I have just noticed ; not known perhaps, certainly not considered, by all of us ; but yet which deserves our notice. We are so accustomed to hear and talk of men's Wills, that we regard them as matters of course ; as what always has been and must be. Yet it is a great power to be able to act when we are dead ; to dispose at our pleasure to this person or to that, on such or such conditions, of lands, money, goods, over which we can exercise no control, and which we can by no possibility enjoy. And thus history and law tell us of a time amongst several nations, when Wills were either unknown, or were but a request of the dying man, which might after his death be either granted or refused. A state of things is on record, when the succession to all property was fixed by a general law, and a man's power over his own ended when, to speak properly, it was his own no longer. And in one sense of the word, this state of things was the natural one ; natural, according to that perverted meaning of the term, by which we lose sight of our own proper nature, and speak of that nature only which we have in common with the brutes. For in so far as we are creatures who in a few years must cease to be, and when dead, can do nothing and enjoy nothing in this world,—so far is it natural that all our will and all our power should end with us in our grave. But in so far as we have another nature than this, even as far as regards this world,—as we are connected with our fathers, and our children with us, and we can in no manner get rid of the manifold influences of the generations which have gone before us, neither can our children by possibility get rid of the influences of our generation ;—so it is most natural and most wise that the past and present and future

should be linked to one another, in a chain not to be broken; that in every age the dead should still, in a manner, be present amongst the living; that their words and actions should still have force, and share with our own in the disposition of us and ours.

These considerations are each of them of force, to make us consider the making a Will as one of the most solemn actions of our lives. For the power of making it is given us by society, which entrusts us with what we never could have taken to ourselves, and allows us to extend our life, in a manner, far beyond its natural bounds, in the confidence that so great a privilege shall be exercised in a becoming spirit; that having a second term of existence given us, we should use it worthily. And again, thinking of what we write in our Will as written for that time when we shall be actually abiding God's judgment, with no power whatever to repent of or undo any foolish or wicked thing that we may have said or done,—we shall thus also consider carefully what we are doing, and take heed not to commit sin in such a matter, where, by the very necessity of the case, there shall be no place left for repentance.

Yet with all this, Wills, as I have already said, often exhibit the saddest marks of sinful passions; so that there are cases in which we should think worse of a man from the spirit shown in his last Will, than from anything that he had been known to do or say in the course of his life. This arises no doubt from the practice, in itself reasonable and good, of making our Wills when we are in full health and strength; when we have no distinct sense at all of the period for which we are making them. And again, the great abuses formerly practised by superstition or by fraud, when the priest beset the dying man, and persuaded him to leave his money to what were called spiritual uses,—which were neither always really spiritual and Christian-

like, nor recommended on just and Christian reasons,—these abuses have left such an impression upon men's minds, that there is often a shyness in the clergy of speaking upon the subject, either personally in their visits to the sick, or publicly in the pulpit. Yet to speak of it in the pulpit, at least, can by no possibility be open to abuse; and it may be something to lay down generally, and when there can be no particular application intended, such rules as a Christian ought to follow in a matter so solemn.

First of all it may be right just to observe, that a Will in all its directions and bequests should be free from extravagance and folly. There are instances of Wills in which the testator has seemed to indulge some strange fancy, as if he wished to excite astonishment, or exercise a capricious power even after he is dead. But when society enabled us to live on in a manner after our death, it meant that our reason and principle should so live, and not our folly. And what sense can he entertain of death and judgment, who in the very preparation for both, indulges in some absurdity such as would be ill fitted for the graver moods and better tempers even of our common life? But as this is not the commonest fault in Wills, I need not do more than thus briefly allude to it.

A worse feeling, which sometimes appears in a man's Will, is that of resentment or revenge. There is a pleasure felt in remembering old slights, in vexing or disappointing those who may once have offended or neglected us. And with such feelings unrepented of, nay, gloried in, and exercised, so to speak, after death, we appear before God to ask that we may be forgiven. Surely every such Will is no other than a horrible record, written and signed and sealed by his own hand, of a man's eternal condemnation. By it, he being dead yet speaketh, to say that he is indeed dead, body and soul. For what hope

can the fondest charity entertain of such a man's repentance, when he tells us himself that up to the very latest minute of his life he did not repent and would not?

But this also, it is to be hoped, is a fault comparatively rare. By far the commonest evil feelings manifested in Wills are covetousness and ambition: the desire of leaving a name, of making a family, of conferring enormous wealth and consequence on ourselves as living in our posterity. Thence the spirit of tying up property for as long a period as we can, that our own power may be the longer felt, and the idol which we worship may not pass away. How often is the peace and mutual love of a family broken by such Wills as these; when brothers and sisters are put in a wholly wrong position with regard to each other; one unduly exalted, the rest unduly made dependent! But here, too, the thing which is most plain on the face of such a Will is, that it could not have been an act done in the name of the Lord Jesus. For if there be such sins as covetousness and ambition, and worldly-mindedness, I know not how they can be more shown than by thus retaining them to the last; and declaring that riches and worldly rank are things far more precious to us than love for our children individually, or than their cherishing towards one another the natural feelings of brotherly confidence and affection.

Another point, harder to touch upon, and on which one cannot give any universal rule, yet requires, I think, to be noticed. There are, I believe, some parts of Europe in which no Will is valid unless it contains some bequest to the poor. This is evaded, as such rules are apt to be, by making the sum so bequeathed to the poor merely nominal. Yet the feeling which dictated the rule was founded on truth;—that in the last act of his life a man should regard not only justice, but charity; that he should remember those whom Christ so often and so earnestly has

recommended to our care. And that our Church shares the feeling may be seen from one of the rubrics in the service of the Visitation of the Sick, which says that ‘the minister should not omit earnestly to move such persons as are of ability to be liberal to the poor.’ Certain it is, that bequests for charitable and public purposes are far more rare than they were formerly: in proportion as those Wills of covetousness and ambition have more abounded, the spirit of charity and of Christ has departed; and the spirit of pride and selfishness and mammon has come in its place. And certain it is also, that there are some purposes both of public usefulness or ornament, and also of what is more directly called charity, which in every man’s immediate neighbourhood require to be promoted. Such objects, let them be of what particular kind they will, deserve surely to be considered. Not, of course, to the real injury or impoverishment of those whose claim upon us is one of blood and nature; yet greatly in preference to views of aggrandizement for our children, or of giving them more than enough; which is quite as great an injury to them as giving them less than enough.

Now it is true that self-deceit, which never forsakes us, would very likely try to persuade us in the several cases that I have been noticing, that our Will was just, or at any rate that we have a right to do as we will with our own. But let men consider that although they may deceive themselves, yet they cannot deceive God; that they must be judged, not according to what a hardened and corrupted conscience whispered here, but according to what it will tell them when the time for such deceit is over, and sin appears to them as it is. And as the risk of what they are doing is great,—inasmuch as their Will must outlive all possibility of their repentance, and if it be a sin it must stand as such for ever,—it were well if they used beforehand the precautions of Christian wisdom. And as

there is a god of this world who blinds our eyes, and as there is a deceived conscience which sometimes will not let us see that we have a lie in our right hand, were it not wise to seek that aid and that light which have been given us that we should not walk in darkness,—that we should make our Wills in the first instance, and review them from time to time afterwards, with earnest prayer to God that an act so solemn may be done under the influence of His Spirit, and in the name of the Lord Jesus?

It was once the custom that every Will should begin with the words, ‘In the name of God;’ and the testator very commonly stated that he committed his soul to God through Christ, before he proceeded to say a word of his worldly affairs. No doubt the use of these expressions outlived the true sense of their reality: they may be found, it is but too likely, standing in the front of a Will so little Christian-like, that they are no better than blasphemy. But what is our state when we leave off the very expression of good feelings, because we will keep our real feelings at such utter variance with what is good? But whether the words are used or no, certain it is that every Will not conceived in their spirit is an act of sin. To look forward deliberately to what is to happen after our death, without any thought of what death is, and into Whose presence it brings us, cannot but be great ungodliness; that mind can hold but little communion with God at other times which is not led to think upon Him then.

A truly Christian Will, as it is a solemn act and the exercise of a great privilege, so it is full of happy thoughts and of blessing. The best and holiest human affections are mingled with the thoughts of death and of eternity. What there is of good and precious in this world stands out the brighter when we are steadily observing how much of it is passing away. Together with

the pleasure of exercising for the last time our tender care for those whom God has given to us, must rise also our thankfulness to Him for having enabled us to provide for them, and our prayers that He will continue to abide with them when we are gone. Nor is it unpermitted to the Christian parent of Christian children to glance in thought from this, his latest act of communion with them in this mortal state, to his first meeting with them again in the kingdom of Christ, when no more care will be needed either for himself or for them, for both will be joined in everlasting love and blessedness, one with each other in God and in Christ.

RYDAL CHAPEL :

January 12, 1840.

SERMON XXXI.

*THE EPISTLES TO TIMOTHY—CHRISTIAN USE
OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.*

2 TIMOTHY iii. 1.

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

So little regard has been paid to chronological order in the present arrangement of St. Paul's Epistles, that the two first written are immediately followed by the two latest of all; the two to the Thessalonians, I mean, are immediately followed by the two to Timothy. We may thus pass at once from the beginning of St. Paul's written Gospel to its end, from a period only a few months later than his first crossing over into Europe, to one in all probability only a little while preceding his death. And in doing this, we may compare the more full language of hope which abounds in his earlier Epistles, with the darker anticipations which are more common in his later ones. For although it was revealed to him very early, as we see by the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, that the progress of the Gospel would be grievously obstructed, still the full sense of the extent and greatness of the evil does not appear to have possessed his mind so thoroughly then, as we find it to have done some years afterwards, when it was not only a matter of expectation and belief, but of actual experience.

To those who love to realize past times, and to bring them before their minds with something of the freshness and distinctness of the scenes actually present to them, it is often a grievous disappointment to find great chasms here and there in the records of history, where the road, so to speak, has been almost wholly carried away, and there is no possibility of restoring it. But of all these chasms, none is so much to be regretted as that wide one of more than a century, in which all full and distinct knowledge of the early state of Christianity after the date of the Apostolical Epistles has been irretrievably buried. In the Apostolical Epistles themselves we have a picture clear and lively, from which we can gain a very considerable knowledge of what the Christian Church then was. But from these Epistles, which merely as historical monuments are so invaluable,—from these records, undoubtedly genuine, uncorrupted, uninterpolated, and in which every thing is drawn with touches equally faithful, bold, and distinct,—we pass at once into a chaos. We come to works of disputed genuineness, with a corrupted text, full of interpolations; and which, after all, are so different from the Apostolical Epistles in their distinctness and power of touch, that even if we could rely on their authenticity, the knowledge to be derived from them is exceedingly vague and scanty. In this absence of good and trustworthy records, all manner of wild guesses, and stories either without any foundation or greatly altered and exaggerated, grew up plenteously; and it is sufficiently striking that while we have a legendary account pretending to relate the place and manner of the deaths of all the Apostles, there are scarcely two of the whole number, of whose deaths we have even so much as a statement of probable authority.

Thus God has, as it were, encircled the goodly garden

of Scripture truth in which there grows the tree of life, with a wide belt of desert on every side; preserving it manifestly distinct from all other and merely human cultivation, and condemning to a more than ordinary blindness those who can see but little difference between the garden of the Lord and the howling wilderness that reaches up to its very walls. We stop then at the last Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy, with something of the same interest with which one pauses at the last hamlet of the cultivated valley, when there is nothing but moor beyond. It is the end, or all but the end, of our real knowledge of primitive Christianity; there we take our last distinct look around; further the mist hangs thick, and few and distorted are the objects that we can discern in the midst of it.

But this last distinct view is overcast with gloom. 'In the last days perilous times shall come.' Then there follows a picture of what men would be, who in word and form were Christians, but indeed led the lives of the worst heathens. Those who had the form of godliness, or of Christianity,—for the two words in the Epistles to Timothy are generally synonymous,—those who had the form of Christianity, were yet false, unholy, disobedient, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Into what hands then was the Church of God to fall, when such men as these were to be its members? But the Apostle relies that Timothy would in his own generation struggle against this evil, because he had from a child been familiar with that revelation of God which was profitable for the teaching of truth and for the removing of error, for correcting all that was amiss, and fostering every seed of good in us, for the perfecting of God's servants in all good works. This is St. Paul's testimony to the importance of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, when as yet

the truths of Christ's Gospel were known more by the hearing of the Apostles' preaching than by the reading of their written works.

This testimony is one that is well deserving of our attention. No doubt it is applicable, and even in a higher degree, to the writings of the New Testament; but yet this is not its original meaning; St. Paul spoke it entirely of the Old. And it is manifest that he points to the Old Testament as to the only sure foundation, to speak generally, on which Christianity could be built; that those who received it without this foundation were likely grievously to corrupt it, that those who received it upon this foundation were likely to be made wise unto salvation.

Now it is manifest that St. Paul is not here referring to the types or prophecies of the Old Testament; he is not regarding its witness to Christ, but its own preparation for Him. For it is plain that although a knowledge of the prophecies might greatly contribute towards making a man believe in Christ, yet if he had believed on Him without knowing these prophecies, he would, so far as their witness was concerned, be exactly in the same place as though he had known them; they would but have helped him to that faith which he had reached without them, by the mere hearing of the words and works of Christ, and of His resurrection from the dead. What St. Paul means, then, is something different from the witness afforded by the Old Testament; it must be the general character of its revelation of God. And in this respect it does certainly seem that the Old Testament is most perfectly fitted to be, not only historically, and regarding the world as a whole, but for each one of us in the formation of our own minds, a preparation for the knowledge of Christ.

We all know that the predominant character of the New Testament is mercy, in the widest sense of the term.

It speaks of light, of freedom, of exaltation, of glory. It does away with the bondage of forms and ceremonies; it addresses men as reasonable beings, appealing to their consciences and their inward sense of right and wrong. In a word, it holds out to them the privilege of being no more the servants of God, but His children. All its tendency, therefore, is comforting and elevating. But do we all need to be comforted and elevated? May it not be that we are in no distress that needs comfort?—that we are in no such humiliation as requires to be exalted? Surely it very well may be so, and is so, beyond all question, with many of us.

And is not the effect of Christianity on such a state of mind very often just what the Apostle describes it? Men retain its form, but deny its power. They are not enemies to Christ; on the contrary, they admire His character and His words exceedingly; the beauty and purity of Christianity affects them with unfeigned pleasure; its promises cannot but be most delightful to them. But meanwhile the yoke of Christ, light as it is, and so great a relief to those who really are wearied and heavy laden, is more than they can consent to bear. They admire Christianity, but can scarcely be called themselves Christians; their lives therefore are full of evil,—self-indulgent, proud, disobedient, unthankful, and unholy,—exactly in the manner described by St. Paul.

Now what, on the contrary, is the predominant character of the Old Testament? May it not, speaking of it as a whole, be certainly said to be awe? One instance may be mentioned which shows this in the strongest manner. The characteristic differences of the Old and New Testament may be seen in the two last chapters of St. John's Gospel on the one hand, and in the last chapter of Deuteronomy on the other; in the view given of Christ rising on Mount Calvary, and Moses dying on Mount Nebo. For

consider who and what Moses was;—how faithful a servant of God, and how favoured. Yet even he, for one unadvised word, for one indulgence as it should seem of a hasty temper, though generally the meekest man upon earth,—even he was not allowed to enter that promised land, which for so many years he had been looking for. He had laboured, and another was to enter into his labours; and before Israel might arise and go over Jordan to take possession of the land of their inheritance, Moses, their leader, their lawgiver, and their prophet, must retire alone to Mount Nebo to die by himself, and even in his burial to be separated from his people. Surely for our sakes this was written, that we might know what that judgment of God is from which Christ has delivered us; and how little we could in our own strength endure to abide it.

But what is written concerning Moses is but in accordance with what is written concerning the people of Moses, and concerning other nations also. We see everywhere the language of judgment, not unmixed certainly, yet predominant; because the evil which draws it down is predominant everywhere. We see obedience required to the minutest outward observances, even on pain of death. We see devastations of war, of pestilence, of famine, sweeping away the young and the old, and, to speak man's language, the righteous and the wicked together. We see one thing above all others insisted on, the worship of God and the keeping of His law. God is everywhere exalted; whilst the wisdom, the glory, the power, and the pretended righteousness and innocence of man, are all humbled in the dust together.

And is not this the very impression which we need, in order to go with true and wholesome feelings to the cross of Christ? Is it by talking of man's frailty and God's

goodness that we shall ever learn the full meaning of that which Christ has purchased for us,—the being reconciled to God? Is it by going on carelessly, by taking life as we find it, by being under no concern for our actions, by talking of heaven as the natural termination of our life in this world, that we can ever understand what is contained in the word Redemption? Or is it not certain, that to such a careless and confident state of mind the very mercy of the language of the Gospel acts as a poison? We turn the grace of God into lasciviousness; we do not judge ourselves; and we are therefore in danger of being not saved, but judged, by the Lord, when He shall appear at the last day.

Surely the Old Testament is well fitted for the reproof of such feelings as these. It represents most awfully to us what God will be to us if we do not fear Him. Nor is it true that we need this representation once only; that having once felt the fear of the Lord, and rejoiced therefore in Christ's salvation, we have nothing to do with fear any more. As I said last Sunday that no man is ever wholly dead to the law, so it is true, or rather it is the same thing to say, that no man has wholly done with fear. We are ever needing something to sober us, to remind us from what evil we have been delivered. We need what we have,—the Scriptures in their fulness, the Old Testament and the New together: that while the New Testament shows us clearly what of the Old Testament has passed away, and what in it was but imperfect, and suited to a time of greater ignorance, the Old Testament may show us no less clearly what will be our portion if we neglect the great salvation offered to us; if boasting of living in the light, our deeds are yet deeds of evil. It may show us what God's law is, and what His judgment; how He puts down all who exalt themselves against Him, or live without

regarding Him. It may finally make us understand that as the law of faith exalts most highly the law of works, so the law of works, on the other hand, is no less the highest and only true exaltation of the law of faith in Christ Jesus.

RUGBY CHAPEL :

November 20, 1836.

SERMON XXXII.

THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD.

HEBREWS x. 31.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

SOME perhaps, when they hear these words, may be reminded of the somewhat different feeling expressed by David, when he was told to make his choice between three different sorts of judgment proposed to him. His expression was, ‘ Let me now fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great ; and let me not fall into the hands of men.’ Yet here again these sentiments, seemingly so opposite, do but make up together a great and most wholesome truth. ‘ Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great ; that we may not fall into the hands of the Lord, when he shall come to judge his people.’

‘ Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great ; and let me not fall into the hands of men.’ Let us experience God’s judgments, and not men’s. Strictly speaking, indeed, everything that befalls us is God’s judgment, whether it comes upon us through the instrumentality of nature or of man. And again, on the other hand, it is very possible that nothing, whether it come from nature or from man, may seem to us to be God’s judgment ; we may see in it nothing beyond the instrument, and not

look up to its Author. But still, undoubtedly, we are more apt to see God's hand in what we call natural visitations than in those brought on us by man, and therefore they are far more apt to do us good. And the reason of this is evident. In evils brought on us by the hand of man, the injustice, or cruelty, or dishonesty of the instrument,—that is to say of the man,—hinders us from looking any further; and as injustice and cruelty excite our anger, we are rather disposed to be angry with another than with ourselves; we think not of our own sin, but of our enemy's wickedness. And this is a great aggravation of his wickedness, and is indeed one of the worst parts of all injustice, that it is likely to do not a worldly injury only, but a spiritual one besides; by exciting in the mind of him to whom it is offered such feelings as lead him away from his great business, the business of watching his own heart and conduct.

We may reasonably pray then to fall into the hands of the Lord, and not into the hands of men. We may pray to be visited rather with sickness or with poverty, produced by no fault but simply by misfortune, or with the loss of friends by death, than to meet with ill-usage, with neglect, injustice, cruelty, unkindness, than to lose our friends through their fault or folly. But the reason why we may thus pray, is, that by falling into the hands of God, and by feeling that we are doing so, we shall escape falling into His hands hereafter. For now His mercies are great, but then His judgments will be intolerable.

If we have attended to the lesson read this afternoon from the Epistle to the Hebrews, we may have observed how, amidst the fullest dwelling on the mercy of Christ's sacrifice, it also contains some of the most solemn language of warning that is to be met with anywhere in Scripture. It warns us of the infinite danger of falling back, if we have begun to do well; of neglecting that great salvation

offered us, if we have never begun to be in earnest at all. It declares that a worse judgment shall overtake those who are disobedient now, than ever fell on those who broke the law of Moses. Thus there is, even in our dispensation of mercy, a place left for heavier judgment than existed even in what is called the dispensation of death.

This is, of all the revelations of Scripture, the one which men can least bear. They would fain find something of hope, something of mitigation, even in the heaviest sentence of God's anger. They would fain believe that all shall be well at the last. Most natural is it for flesh and blood so to wish; most natural that the strong wish should labour to become belief. And in this matter, where the temptation to deceive ourselves with a false belief is so great,—where the truth, however unwelcome, is yet one which bears on it so much of practical importance,—where, in short, it is God's declaration on the one hand opposed by all the suggestions of our evil nature on the other,—what security for our faith has God provided,—on what authority is the truth made known to us,—with what plainness and fulness is it expressed? It is worth while to observe this, whilst so many are again endeavouring to revive the old arch falsehood of the enemy of our souls, and pretend that the Scriptures are not enough for us, that they are not plain enough or full enough, that their view requires to be adjusted and interpreted according to the standard of man's tradition. How is it with the great matter of which I have been speaking, our condition hereafter? Are we left to pick this out from obscure or ambiguous passages, on which the interpretations and traditions of the Church can alone throw a clear and decisive light? Are we told to go to some writer who lived so near the Apostles' time that he could not have mistaken their doctrine; although it be notorious that they themselves, till the Holy Spirit came upon them to lead them into all truth, did often mistake

the doctrine of their Lord, even while they were continually hearing Him? Not so, my brethren. God has not willed that we should rest on that rotten staff, which His word earnestly exhorts us to cast away. The declaration of His truth is in His own Scriptures, clear and full; no man can mistake, no man can dispute its meaning. None was ever so foolish as to try to strengthen it by the testimonies of Councils or Fathers; for we have it in the words of Christ Himself, who knew with the knowledge of divinity, the certainty of the things which He uttered. He said of Judas, that it were good for him if he had never been born. He said that His own sentence on the wicked at the last day should be, ‘Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.’ Can that be inconsistent with God’s mercy, which is declared by Him who laid down His life for us? Are we more wise than Christ? are we more full of love than He is, that our measure of what is true and just and good should be one that we may dare to prefer to His?

Observe, again, that where authority is really needed for the human mind to lean upon, there it is provided for us; and of such a kind that we may safely rest on it. We cannot possibly understand the reasons of God’s judgments: the whole system of His government must be infinitely beyond our grasp. What might fully explain to us the grounds of His dealings with us, is absolutely beyond our present knowledge; yet the fact that He will deal so and so with us, is one of the utmost importance for us to know and believe. Now here is the Scripture notion of faith when it relates to the understanding, and is required to struggle against difficulties of the intellect, as well as temptations of the senses and corrupt affections. It is not that God sets before us some proposition which we cannot fully understand, and which after all has no tendency to make us wiser and better; still less does He require us to

believe a thing thus unintelligible and unprofitable on the authority of men no wiser than ourselves. But He declares to us a statement perfectly intelligible and most deeply practical, namely, that those who are condemned at His judgment are condemned without hope for ever. We can understand fully what this means, but we cannot perceive the reasons for it ; we fancy that we see reasons against it ; we are tempted, therefore, to doubt its truth. Here, therefore, is the place for authority on the one hand, and for faith on the other. God Himself gives us no less authority than His own. Christ says to us in effect : ‘ I have shown you that in Me there is the fulness of wisdom and power and love. I tell you, that this thing which seems to you so shocking and so incredible will yet come to pass, and that I myself will do it. The reasons for it you cannot now understand, nor can they therefore be revealed to you. But I tell you that so it will be, and that so it is right that it should be. Believe it for the sake of My word, if you have known that man cannot do wiser or better than to trust in God, his Maker and his Saviour.’ Then whosoever loves and has known Christ, will believe His word ; and those who have not known and loved Him will not believe Him. But to those who do know Him, faith in His word is their highest reason ; they know that they might a thousand times better doubt themselves and their own wisdom and goodness, than doubt the wisdom and goodness of Christ.

Such is the faith which Christ will bless, or rather, which is in itself the greatest blessing of all that His Spirit, the Giver of all good gifts, can bestow upon us. It is a blessing so to know and so to love Him, that entire faith in Him becomes the first dictate of our enlightened Christian reason. It is a blessing to believe all His words, for nothing has ever come from Him which does not help to make us wise unto salvation ; His words are spirit and

life. Here is nothing of idolatry, nothing of folly and superstition. Here is no worshipping day by day in an idol's temple, till our corrupted mind transfers to its idol the glory of the living God, and bestows upon it that faith, which, as it had folly or wickedness for its foundation, so it has one or both for its fruit. And when we have thus bestowed our faith upon our idol, and stand ready to believe and do its bidding, then comes the second curse of this wretched state,—that whereas Christ's words are spirit and life, and to do them is life everlasting, so the idol's words are some folly or ungodliness, which to hearken to and obey is death. Then what in Christ's service is devotion, in the idol's is fanaticism : what in the service of the All-wise and All-righteous and All-merciful, is a wise, a holy, but still a most charitable zeal, becomes naturally in the service of the evil idol, a mad, a dishonest, and a bitter bigotry, calling evil good, and good evil ; and putting the sign of its idol, whatever it may be, in the place of the sign of God's Spirit,—the departing from all iniquity. This is that evil one which, according to St. Paul's prophecy, has thrust himself into the temple of God, has exalted himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped ; and claiming that faith and obedience which are due to Christ alone, has so shown himself to be as God.

But the real Christian faith in Christ's promises and Christ's threatenings, and which is in danger of being supplanted by a false and idolatrous faith in man's superstitions, is indeed what we all require daily. Where is the man of us, however earnestly he may love Christ's words, who can pretend that he believes them with the same undoubting faith that he would do if he knew and loved Christ better ? If Christ is in some degree manifest to us, yet is it so far as to fulfil His promise, that He and His Father would come to us, and make their abode with us ?

Conceive, if that were the case, how entire would be our confidence in all God's words ; how steadily should we look beyond the grave and see the river's farther shore. For what makes death clear or dark to us, is exactly our greater or less knowledge of God : I do not mean a pretended knowledge of His nature, but a knowledge of His goodness to us, and of His holiness ; that if we are with Him, whether it be in life or in death, we shall be safe and happy. And it is a knowledge also of His terrors, that it is indeed a fearful thing to find ourselves in His hands for the first time, when He comes to judgment. For then will be fulfilled in us that Scripture, ' We shall look on Him whom we pierced.' Here we knew Him not, and therefore carelessly offended Him ; but then we must know Him, and shall find that the evil done or the good not done to one of the least of our brethren, was a wrong or a neglect to Him.

And one way of learning to know Him here, is that recommended to us in the same chapter from which my text is taken, where it says, ' Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works ; ' and of what kind of ' considering ' he is speaking, and that our love should look beyond our neighbour's bodily good, is plain from the verse following : ' Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, but exhorting one another,'—not serving and loving God alone by ourselves, but striving to sympathise with others and to get others to sympathise with us, that we may love each other the better from all loving Him. This is the very bond of our Christian communion ; this is the meaning of our receiving it together. As far as it is a communion with Christ alone, we might receive it each by ourselves, but the Church wisely orders it otherwise, because Christ is not alone nor are we alone ; He is the head of His body the Church, and we are

members one of another, and we cannot come to Him alone. O that we might feel this more and more, and all draw one another towards Him! Then we should be indeed one with Him and He would be one with us; and being thus with Him in this life, we should be with Him for ever in happiness, and not fall into His hands as a God of judgment.

RUGBY CHAPEL

December 4 1836.

SERMON XXXIII.

ST. JAMES.—CHRISTIAN SERVICE OF GOD.

ST. JAMES i. 27.

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

THE word here translated ‘religion,’ is one which occurs very seldom in the New Testament. It denotes commonly the outward service of religion, as consisting in rites and ceremonies; and as these were supposed too often to be the real service of God, so the title of ‘religious’ might be, and was, applied to persons who in their lives and hearts scarcely served God at all. Hence the language of the Apostle in the text, and in the verse immediately before it, declares how much the word had been misused, and how it should be used properly. His religion or service to God is vain, who bridles not his tongue; whereas his is the true religion or service to God, who visits the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and who keeps himself unspotted from the world. Such is the meaning of the text; let us now proceed to consider it more fully.

It has been the fate of certain passages of Scripture to be continually made use of for party purposes, and to be used for the sake of giving the authority of Scripture to views and doctrines to which in reality the Scripture is either adverse or indifferent. Thus worldly men are for

ever quoting the text, 'Christ's kingdom is not of this world;' in order to prevent the Gospel from being admitted as the world's law. Others, who would represent differences of religion as of no consequence, quote the words of St. Peter, that 'in every land he who feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.' A third set are fond of applying to the practice of using written forms of prayer in the church, the expression of St. Paul, which has not the slightest relation to it, about 'holding fast the form of sound words;' while there have been others no less absurd, who have quoted as condemning the repetitions in our Church service, our Lord's words to His disciples, telling them, 'when they pray; not to use vain repetitions.' So also with the words of the text; they also have been used invidiously to decry what we commonly call devotion or religious affections, and to represent the whole of religion as consisting in acts of charity and temperance.

Now the lesson to be drawn from these misquotations, as far as our own use is concerned, is to show us how necessary it is to study the Scripture in the first place generally, and in the second place carefully and sensibly. He whose reading is confined to detached texts or passages, or to particular parts of the Scripture only, cannot see the whole mind of the Spirit respecting us, but must get views incomplete and partial. The Epistle of St. James presents one view of Christianity, and one most beautiful and instructive; but it does not give us all the views which we need; we were not intended to refer to it alone, as the Epistles of St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John have been provided for us also. So, on the other hand, it is ill done to admire St. Paul so exclusively, as to refuse, as some have done, to listen to St. James also. Again, it is necessary to study the Scripture carefully and sensibly, as well as generally, in order to understand what the words meant in the first instance,

and how far they can or ought to be applied to things seemingly similar now. Obvious as this seems, even to a truism, yet it would be well if it were attended to in practice; and that it is not attended to, every day's experience of men's talking and writing upon points connected with the Scriptures does but prove too fully.

But to return to our particular subject. It is clearly wrong so to interpret St. James as to make him say literally, that the whole of religion consists in acts of charity and temperance. It is manifest that every idea of religion contains in it the idea of serving God. And it is equally clear that there can be no serving God, without intending to serve Him; that is, without thinking Him to have a claim on our service. When then St. James calls the works of charity and temperance 'pure and undefiled religion,' or service of God, it is plain, by the very force of the words, that he must mean such works of charity and temperance as are done in order to serve God: that is, such as are done in faith. For if they be done without any notion of God, they cannot be called a pure service to God; for they are not a service to Him at all, except accidentally; they are no service so far as regards our intention. But it may be said that still the words include no mention of Christ; and that pure religion, according to St. James, may exist without any belief in the Son, provided there be a belief in the Father. Undoubtedly, if the words of the text were a single fragment, written by we knew not whom, and belonging to we know not what, this might be said fairly. But I only allude to it now, to show the mischief of looking at texts of Scripture separately, without regard to the writer, or the occasion, or the whole composition from which the text is taken. The interpretation which might be given of the passage fairly, if it were the fragment of an unknown writer, becomes absurd when we know that it is a passage out of an Epistle

written by a Christian to Christians ; and that if the writer had really meant that true religion need not include faith in Christ, both he and the persons to whom he was writing were no better than madmen ; for they had separated themselves from the mass of their countrymen, and were exposed daily to persecution, only for their profession of that very name which yet, according to the supposed meaning of the text, has no necessary connection with pure religion.

What St. James does mean then, is no more than this, —that the Christian who would truly serve God in Christ, must serve Him not in word, but in deed ; and he selects especially two classes of good deeds, which form as it were the very essence of this service, those of charity and purity.

And here undoubtedly the lesson of the text is one perpetually applicable. It points out what are, and ever have been, the peculiar virtues of Christianity, what all parts of the New Testament alike insist on. And they are so insisted on, not only for their importance, but also for their difficulty :—because they are at variance with some of our strongest inclinations, and must be practised against the greatest temptations to the contrary ; because, although we may find one of the two agreeable to us, it hardly ever happens that we find both to be so ; but on the contrary, men have endeavoured as it were to make up for neglecting the one, by their great attention to the other,—as if benevolent persons might be excused for their worldly-mindedness, or persons of strict and pure and quiet lives might be excused for their want of active charity.

And what applies to all others, applies also to us. The remaining part of this sermon will therefore be employed in showing what we are to learn particularly and personally from the words of the Apostle in the text. Now, then,

speaking as a Christian to Christians, we who have believed in Christ's salvation, and feel that through Him alone we stand before God as capable of doing Him service, if we ask how we can best serve Him, let us hear the Apostle: 'by visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and by keeping ourselves unspotted from the world.'

1. 'By visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction.' 'There is something here,' you will say, 'that does not quite apply to us. Not only does our age seem to make this command unsuitable to us, but also our situation here. At home, surrounded perhaps by those whom we have known from our childhood, even our age would by no means hinder us from contributing to the comfort of our neighbours: we might often perform acts of kindness with no presumption or impropriety. But here, amongst strangers, and without the guidance and sanction of our friends, a literal fulfilment of the Apostle's command would seem almost an intrusion: it would be ridiculous if we were to attempt to fulfil it.' So you might say, and certainly there would be much reason in your statement. Yet we may all remember cases in which the command has been fulfilled literally even by some in your situation; and fulfilled, so far as I know, without any circumstances of impropriety or of ridicule; while I do know positively that much comfort was received by those who were the objects of the kindness. But, of course, to do this does require a certain age, and a certain weight of character; it cannot be expected of all. It is possible, however, to relieve the fatherless and widows in their affliction without personally visiting them. Occasions occur when your numbers make it as easy for you to give relief in money, as they might render your personal attentions impossible. And it was with great pleasure, that I heard that when such an occasion did lately offer

itself, it was not altogether neglected. I was very glad to hear that a work of pure charity had been begun and carried on amongst yourselves, a work to which no bad motives could have prompted you, (as in the instances of that unholy and unchristian bounty which the young, amongst the richest classes, sometimes show to the vile tools of their vices and their follies,)—and which, so far as I can see, must have arisen out of good, and ended in good.

Here was one such occasion; but do you suppose that others can ever be wanting? Do you not think that fit objects are always to be found, to make it your duty to deny yourselves in your expenses for your own mere pleasures, that you may have to give to him that needeth? Is it not evident that a great school might thus, at comparatively a small sacrifice to its members, be rendered a positive blessing to the poor around it, instead of being, as has been too often the case, a positive evil? And if so, is it not clear also that you have a way of fulfilling St. James's command, without any forwardness or extravagance,—a way open to the very youngest? And if it be open, is it not clear, lastly, that not even the very youngest can without great sin refuse or neglect to follow it?

2. Our Christian service to God consists further 'in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world.' In this I do not see that there is anything which concerns one period of Christianity, or one age of any of us as individuals, more than another. It was a mistake to suppose that, by living in the world, we must necessarily be 'spotted,' that is, defiled and corrupted by it. The two things are very different; inasmuch as the one is our duty, and the other would be our ruin. But along with this, on which there is little need to dwell, it becomes us to remember that, because we do and must live in the world, because a life

of religious solitude is out of the question, that therefore the command to keep ourselves unspotted from the world concerns us so much the more. We are in danger of being corrupted by it, because we must have so much to do with it. And what is the corruption to be dreaded? It is of various sorts; but perhaps, if I might take one as the representative of all the rest,—and being, indeed, the very source of them all,—I should say that it consisted in letting things seen hide from our minds the things that are not seen; in letting the life that now is, so engross us, that we think not of the life that is to come.

This is the corruption of the world generally; how different soever may be the particular sort of things seen by which the things unseen are veiled to us. No doubt there is a great difference here. In middle life we have already outgrown many of these idols; and in old age we shall have outgrown more. Nothing is easier than for the old to overcome the temptations of those in their prime, or for those in their prime to think little of the temptations of the young. But still to all of us it is ‘the world’ that hides heaven from our view: it is something on this side of death which prevents us from fixing our eyes on that which is beyond it. And wherever this prospect of things eternal is so closed, there are we spotted by the world, there our service to God is not the service of faith, is not pure and undefiled religion. This is a temptation from which we cannot escape,—we must not hope to fly from it, but to overcome it. It will haunt us through life in every condition, even amidst sickness and poverty, which we might fancy would save us from it. But undoubtedly it haunts us most, and those whose circumstances are like ours. Age has not yet weakened our powers, poverty and sickness have not taught us how much there is in the world besides enjoyment. And yet in our youth

or vigour, in our health and comforts, woe to us if we are not unspotted by the world,—woe to us if we do not still keep the view of eternal things open; still with an unsparing hand clearing away the branches and the trees, how beautiful soever, that would obstruct the prospect of the mountain of God; doing that for ourselves by our own watchfulness and prayer, which no outward circumstances will ever do for us, if our own care has been wanting.

RUGBY CHAPEL:

May 24, 1835.

SERMON XXXIV

ST. JAMES.—FAITH AND WORKS.

ST. JAMES ii. 18.

Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.

THE Epistle of St. James, and the manner in which some have received it and many more neglected the lesson which it teaches, affords a remarkable instance of the way of teaching followed in the Scriptures, and of the difficulty of getting men in their teaching to follow the same. The Epistle itself takes up one view of Christianity, almost exclusively, and follows it through with the utmost perfectness. The view which I speak of, I may be allowed to call the moral view, as distinguished from the doctrinal; the laying out of sight the great peculiarities of Christianity, and considering it only as it is the law of nature and of Moses, perfected in the two points of love to God and man. It would not have been possible for any part of the Christian Scriptures to have taken up the view exactly contrary to this; that is to have dwelt wholly on the doctrinal points, without the moral points;—for doctrines not used as principles of life, that is, coupled with the moral conclusions for the sake of which they are revealed, are no better than theoretical truth, with which Christianity

has nothing to do. We have, therefore, no part of the New Testament so wholly doctrinal as the Epistle of James is wholly moral; but we have a great many which are both doctrinal and moral; and some in which the doctrinal part has been by some of its interpreters made so far theoretical, that the whole book has seemed, in their use of it, to be exclusively doctrinal, though in reality it is not so.

The view contained in the Epistle of St. James is undoubtedly not the whole of Christianity, any more than the view contained of it in St. Paul's speech to the Athenians. But it was not God's purpose that we should possess either the one or the other of these by themselves. Our whole knowledge of Christianity was not to be drawn from these sources only. It is enough that God judged it fitting that this view of it should be presented to us along with others, as being not only in itself beautiful and useful, but serving especially as an antidote against an evil which was sure from time to time to exalt itself in the church, and always to be in existence,—the evil of dwelling exclusively or predominantly upon mere doctrines as theoretical truths.

Such is the well-known course of scriptural teaching,—to oppose as it were one evil at a time, and that with the utmost force, and often without qualification; leaving the qualification required to be sought for in other parts of Scripture directed against the opposite error. Hence the difficulty of reconciling some passages of Scripture theoretically; although taken practically, they lead to the exact balance in temper and conduct which is most according to God's will. But some not liking this method, and desiring a far greater theoretical exactness than it allows us to attain, have either explained away the passages which they did not like, or, as in the case of the Epistle of St. James, have shut them out of the Scripture altogether. It is

well known that Luther rejected this Epistle, because he judged it contrary to the doctrines of St. Paul. And many others besides Luther, while they have professed to receive it, would undoubtedly have condemned any writings of their own time, which might be confined like it to the same single view of Christianity.

Indeed, this Epistle of St. James, to those who admit its authority, should make them cautious of condemning sermons or books as unchristian, because they may say very little upon the principal doctrines of the Gospel. For here is an Epistle written by one of the very chief of the Apostles, which says nothing about them also ; which does not name so much as the resurrection of Christ, nor His atonement for sins, nor the sanctifying of our hearts by the Holy Ghost. Was it that St. James did not know and value these great truths as much as we can do ? Far from it,—but he knew also that there were circumstances under which these could not, or needed not to be brought forward ; and that it was not to be demanded of all Christians, in all their writings, to be for ever dwelling upon them.

Now directly in opposition to the moral view of the Gospel stands the extreme doctrinal view ; and this extreme doctrinal view is combated accordingly in the passage from which the text is taken. And as God foresaw that this view would, in after ages, be grounded chiefly on a false interpretation of St. Paul's writings, so it was ordered that against those very writings as so interpreted, the language of St. James should be especially directed. For nothing is more evident than that the whole passage now before us is directed against the language in the Epistle to the Romans, as that language was misinterpreted by wickedness or fanaticism ; and that it does not in the slightest degree interfere with it, as taken according to the meaning of the writer. Nor is it at all to our purpose to

ask whether St. James, from his situation amongst the Jews at Jerusalem, had heard so many things said against St. Paul, that he really believed him to have held the doctrines here condemned. If, as a man, he so judged, yet God would by no means allow His Apostles, in those writings which were to guide the Church for ever, to impair each other's authority. We know that St. James has not written against St. Paul, even though he himself, misled by the inveteracy of those about him, may have thought that the doctrine which he was combating was really taught by St. Paul. But we are sure of this, that he could not have intended to answer what St. Paul has actually said in his Epistle to the Romans, because there is nothing there to which the answer is really applicable.

In the words of the text, it cannot be doubted that the words, 'Show me thy faith without thy works,' are intended to allude to such language as we find in St. Paul, 'that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.' They are intended to allude to it as it has been often misinterpreted at various periods, and as it might be interpreted fairly enough if we took it by itself, and had no other means of knowing what St. Paul meant by it. For taking 'faith' in the sense in which it has been too often used since, that is 'correct opinion,' and taking the words 'without the deeds of the law,' with nothing further to explain them,—and we have at once that most wicked doctrine which St. James condemns, namely, 'that if a man's opinions about God be right, he need care nothing about his affections and conduct.' And that this is the sense in which St. James is taking the word 'faith,' appears from the example given,—'Thou believest that there is one God,'—a point which, as so simply stated, is merely an abstract truth, the belief of which is no more than a true opinion respecting a matter of fact, and may therefore be

held by any one whose understanding is sound, though in his moral qualities he may be no better than the devils. He does not say, 'Thou believest that God made thee,' or 'that God has redeemed thee,' or 'that God will judge thee,' or 'that God loves thee;' for belief in these matters is more than opinion, and becomes a principle of action; so that this cannot be believed by the devils, except so far as it is mere fact; and can, by reason of their lost condition, in them lead to nothing. Whereas St. Paul was not speaking of any such belief as was no more than opinion: he did not say that 'He who believes in one God is justified,' but 'He who believes in Jesus Christ is justified;' nor, again, did he mean by 'believing in Jesus Christ,' believing in such facts about Him as the heathens believed, namely, that there had been a man so named crucified in Judæa under Pontius Pilate; but 'whosoever believed that Christ had died for his sins;' a thing which never was believed really by any one who did not care for his sins beforehand, and can be really believed by no man without its making him care for his sins a great deal more than he ever cared before.

The same notion of the word 'faith,' taking it exactly in the sense of opinion as distinguished from practice, is seen no less clearly in what follows about Abraham. St. James instances his offering up his son Isaac, and then adds, 'Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by his works his faith was perfected.' Which is exactly saying,—taking faith in the sense of opinion, it did nothing for Abraham; but as being 'perfected by his works,' that is, as being a principle of action, it justified him. Now this is the very sense in which St. Paul uses it; for he speaks of Abraham 'against hope believing in hope, that he might become the father of many nations;' that is, that Abraham so believed God's promises to him, that he left his country, and sojourned all his life in a strange

land,—not tempted to despair of the prospects held out to him and to give up following God, because there seemed no natural possibility of the promise ever being fulfilled. It is manifest that this faith, so far from being a mere opinion, was a strong and abiding principle by which the whole of his life was governed.

Or, again, take the case of Rahab. Had her faith been no more than opinion, it would certainly have done nothing for her. Suppose that she had heard and believed that the Egyptians had been visited with a great many plagues because they would not let the Israelites go, and that the Israelites had been wonderfully protected by their God through the wilderness. But suppose, also, that she had thought, as many heathens in like case would have thought, that all this was nothing to her or to the Canaanites ; that the gods of Israel had been too strong for the gods of Egypt, but that it was yet to be proved whether they would be too strong for the gods of Canaan. It is manifest then, that her belief of the mighty works done in Egypt and in the wilderness would have been no more than a mere opinion ; it would have led to nothing ; and her belief would not have hindered her for an instant from giving up the spies into the hands of her countrymen. But because she believed that the mighty works done in Egypt showed the God of Israel to be mightier than all gods, to be Him whom she was bound first and above all to serve, therefore her belief was not mere opinion, but principle ; and a principle so strong as led her to break her most sacred earthly ties at her own great risk, in order to escape from the heavier danger of offending Him who was Lord of all.

All, then, that St. James says in this passage, and which he does say most strongly, is, that correct opinions will save no man ; or,—to use the term faith, not in St. Paul's sense of it, but in the unhappy sense which others have

too often attached to it,—that a sound faith in religious matters will alone save no man. And most assuredly St. Paul has never said that it will, but as much the contrary as it is in the power of language to express. His ‘faith which justifies’ is a principle of action so strong as to make a man abhor all former sin; and if it becomes weaker afterwards, then in that proportion it ceases to be faith, and ceases to justify. For, says he, ‘if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor;’—if I return to the sins of which I repented, then I make myself a transgressor. But a transgressor is the very opposite to a man justified or acquitted, for a transgressor is guilty and to be punished, an acquitted man is one judged to be innocent, and therefore not to be punished. So that, in St. James’s sense, faith without works is not justified; in St. Paul’s sense, faith without works is not justified either, for it is no faith at all.

But from this language of these two great Apostles, particularly from the expression which St. James does not hesitate to use, that ‘a man is justified by his works,’ we may surely derive an important lesson, not to make one another offenders for a word. How forward some would be to deny the very name of a Christian to one who were now to use the same language, and to say that ‘men’s works justified them.’ Undoubtedly there is a sense in which St. James would have abhorred the notion of a man’s being justified by his works as strongly as any one, if it was meant by it that a man had so lived that he could fairly challenge of God the reward of eternal glory. But there is a sense also in which St. James did use it without scruple; and others in the same sense may use it also. In the same sense in which Zacharias is said to have walked in all the ordinances of the law blameless; in that common sense meaning, which does not strain every sentence spoken or written to its strictest literal acceptance, men

may be said to be justified by their works. If there is no sense in which this can be said truly, then to talk of our being judged according to our works is idle. Most true it is that we never do or can deserve heaven; that that is God's gift through Jesus Christ; but it is no less true that we should not condemn our brother for using words which an Apostle has used before him, as he, like the Apostle, may mean no more by them than this,—that Christ's people are those only in whom the Spirit of Christ abides.

RUGBY CHAPEL,

April 13, 1834.

SERMON XXXV

ST. JUDE.

ST. JUDE, 20, 21.

But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

WITHOUT entering into a discussion of such points relating to the Epistle of Jude as are open to doubt, it is clear on the face of it, that it was written late amongst the books of the New Testament, after many Christian Churches had been for many years in existence. Thus, in common with some others of the Epistles, it is in a manner a transition to that state of the Church which we ourselves and our fathers have for so many generations witnessed ; a state in which the truths of the Gospel have already lost their freshness to our minds ; the first impression has had time to cool, and the evil of our nature, which had been checked for a moment, is again breaking out fatally. But the Epistle of Jude differs from our experience in this, that although it was written after Christianity had for some time existed, yet it was so near its beginning, that the evil which then was most dangerous bore, even in the midst of its mischief, the marks of that great power which had given occasion to it. I mean that the evil was not that of our common worldliness and selfishness, but was a direct perversion of that great excitement, that

awakening of new hopes and feelings, which the Gospel had brought into the world. The evil was a *fanaticism* of wickedness: and our ordinary state of mind in these days is far enough removed from fanaticism.

But though the evil was different, yet the way to meet the evil was the same then as now. Whether Christianity be corrupted or neglected, it is pure Christianity which must still be the cure. And how does Jude express this pure Christianity? 'Building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.' How like is the language of all the writers of the New Testament to one another, when they come to the sum and substance of our principles and practice! 'Building yourselves up on your most holy faith;'—that is, in St. Paul's words, as we had them in the epistle of this morning, 'Keeping in memory that Gospel which was delivered to you;' and that Gospel was, to use again his own words, 'that Christ died for our sins, and was buried, and rose again the third day.' It is still the same thing, whether it be called 'our most holy faith,' or the 'revealed secret of godliness;' it still relates to the person of Jesus Christ, that He died for us, and rose again.

On this foundation, on our belief of this truth, the goodness of our lives is to be built up; the goodness of our lives and of each particular portion of them. And we see how simple in point of words, how soon spoken, how soon heard, how easily remembered, this foundation is. It is also very easily understood, at least understood so far as to enable us to work by it, or in the words of our text, 'to build up ourselves upon it.' This we see from the numbers of persons who in the beginning of the Gospel became Christians, on the hearing sometimes no more than one single speech or discourse of a Christian

minister. Shall we say that the persons so converted were at once perfect in Christian wisdom, that they understood the full bearing of the Christian doctrine upon all the various parts of their understandings and of their hearts? We know that it was not so; we know that it could not have been so. But shall we say either, that no moral feelings were touched, and no moral principle gained? that they entered into a new society, knowing nothing about it but that it was named after one Jesus who was dead, and whom His disciples affirmed to be alive; or, that a man who had been crucified had afterwards risen from the dead? We know that neither was it thus with them. It was not the mere fact that a man had died and been raised from the dead, but that this had been done for their sakes; that He had died for them, that all might know that God would forgive them; that He had risen from the dead, that all might hope through Him to be raised also.

Now what was thus given as the Gospel to the first Christians, and on which they went on building themselves up in goodness more and more to their lives' end, is just as capable, with God's help, of being told in one single discourse now, and of becoming from this time forward the foundation of good living to us. Let us suppose—though I hope it is an unlikely supposition—that there is any one here as ignorant as some of those who heard the Apostles, that the doctrine of Christ is as new as it was to them. Why even then, if the person be but old enough to know right from wrong, the time in which we are here assembled is long enough to give him the Gospel, long enough to give him the foundation of life eternal. Much more, then, if it is not all new to us, must it be possible to derive such benefit from what is briefly told in this brief space; much more, if we are not learning for the first time, but only refreshing our memory of what we already know.

This may well be brought before you, in a congregation containing not only the usual differences of character which are always to be found in a number of human beings, but also great differences of age, which perhaps some of you dwell upon more than is desirable. That is, the youngest in this congregation, knowing how much younger they are than others, are too apt to think, or to pretend to think, that what is meant to draw the attention of older persons, must be above their comprehension; that sermons, in short, have nothing to do with them. I grant that it is very difficult on many subjects to speak to a number of persons of different ages at once, so as to interest the younger and the older, especially where an excuse for indifference is eagerly sought after; where the one class would be apt to say that what they hear is too trite, and the other that it is too hard. But when speaking of the foundation of our Christian life,—of the revelation of the Gospel,—although in one sense it will be trite to all, and in another too hard for all, yet in another sense it is neither trite to any nor hard to any. There are none amongst us to whom the thought of Christ crucified and Christ risen has been presented so often that we have completely exhausted it; there are none amongst us to whom the same thought is so hard that it cannot be understood to their benefit.

Let us then dwell upon it as the foundation not only of our whole lives, but of that particular portion of them which is now beginning to us here; a foundation on which we may build ourselves up continually till we come to the end of it. It is a most holy faith, indeed, that Christ died for our sins, and rose again. We all of us know right from wrong, we all of us have some notions of duty and some of religion; we have a sort of notion, however confused or faint, that we have something to do in the portion of time set before us, that we may be in it either

good or bad. To this state of mind, with all its ignorance, with all its thoughtlessness, Christ sends the message of His Gospel. To the youngest boy here, He says that He has died for Him; He tells him that He is risen. And if such a boy were to ask why He died for him, Christ would answer, 'Because you are thoughtless and careless; because you think much of your own pleasure, and little of God; because you are living not like one born to immortality, but like one born to die. And therefore I died for you, to show you that it is not a trifle that you are so careless, to show you how much God loves you, though you think so little of Him; to encourage you with the thought,—if ever you are touched, if ever good thoughts arise in you, and you would fain come to God,—that God will most certainly receive you; that He who gave up His own Son that you should not perish, will most certainly forgive you and accept you.' This Christ would say, for He has said it in the Scriptures; and is there one amongst you so young that he cannot understand this language, and feel in it at once warning, and softening, and encouragement?

Again, Christ tells you that He is risen. I allow the difficulty of a young boy fully embracing this, although it may seem the easiest part of the Gospel. Not yet entered on the life that now is, the life that is to come will seem to be very far distant. Nor will instances of early death amongst other young persons bring the impression quite home to you; you know that such instances are an exception to a general rule, and you do not permanently regard them. This will be so commonly; still there will be moments when it will be otherwise, when you will feel, even while very young, that it is a comfort that Christ is risen. I do not allude now to the deaths or sufferings of your friends, but to troubles of your own. I do not say what the troubles may be, they are very

various ; but still we all have troubles ; and even if they may seem light to others, they are not light to us who bear them. There will be moments in the lives of the happiest of us, when, if we were accustomed to apply to it, we should find intense comfort in Christ's assurance that He is risen, for us also to rise to life eternal.

I say, if we are accustomed to apply to it,—that is, if we bear in mind that Christ has died for us ; otherwise I do not think that we can well comfort ourselves in any light, or in any serious trouble, with the prospect of eternal life ; for that prospect then seems either too uncertain in itself, or too high for us to aspire to ; other hopes and comforts are applied to, and they, as best they can, relieve our pain. It is very important to remember this, that we shall never in any trouble go naturally to Christ risen, unless in our common life, in that quiet time free alike from great joys or great troubles, we do continually remember that Christ has died for us.

But suppose now that the Gospel which we have just heard should also dwell with us, as it did with the first Christians ; that we keep in memory the things which we have heard, and so do not believe in vain. Would it do nothing for us ? or should we not indeed be so built up,—should we not so grow in grace and in goodness,—that the effect would commend itself in a manner not to be mistaken, both to our eyes and those of others ? Is it not certain, for instance, that it would instruct us in many points of conduct, and influence us in many points of feeling, which cannot be reached by direct rules or advice from another person ? How impossible would it be for any one,—even supposing that you were willing to comply with his directions,—how impossible would it be to tell you how you should spend your money ; at what point you were beginning to be guilty of extravagance or blameable self-indulgence ? Or again, supposing that in the

matter of spending your time you were willing to take exactly another person's directions, yet who could direct you? who could draw the line between Christian watchfulness and excessive severity? between the refreshment proper and most useful for all of us, and a sinful idleness? It could not be done by others either by word or by writing; books will not give it you, nor human teaching, but only the teaching of Christ's Spirit, through the love of Christ, who died for you. I mean, that if you think that Christ has died for you, and feel the thoughtfulness and the love which that faith inspires, you would have an instinct to guide you surer than any rule; you would feel what Christ would wish, and would be glad to do it; and you would feel no less surely what Christ would give you without upbraiding, and would accept it fearlessly and thankfully.

But this would not be with all in equal measure, for riper years and a more thoughtful disposition would undoubtedly bring forth in some more fruit than in others. Only there would be fruit in all; and this is what our Lord requires of us. Some might be more improved than others, but all would be improved. And then Christ's blessing would be upon us, on the youngest no less than on the oldest. Then having been built up on our most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Spirit,—for who does not pray when he feels at peace with God, forgiven and beloved?—we should keep ourselves in the love of God, and look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ; whose mercy to the youngest of us will make the path through this life safe and free from misery, and keep the prospect of eternal life ever before us, brightening as earth and earthly things grow darker.

RUGBY CHAPEL,
August 30, 1835.

SERMON XXXVI.

ST. PAUL.

ACTS xxii. 21.

Depart ; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

THESE words, taken from the second lesson which you have just heard read in the service of the day, describe shortly the business for which St. Paul was set apart by God : for which he lived and for which he died. He was the Apostle of the Gentiles ; and through him and his preaching we, and all Christians now living,—for where are we to find the remains of the churches of Judæa ?—have received the knowledge of Christ's Gospel. His name is familiar to every ear, and so no doubt are the principal circumstances of his life. Nevertheless, as through the division of the Bible into chapters we are apt to read his history as it were piece by piece, and as we do not always connect his writings with his life, nor consider under what circumstances they were written, it may not be useless if I endeavour to lay before you in one view the principal points in his life and character ; noticing at the same time his several epistles, as the order of our accounts leads us to each of them in its turn.

You have heard his early life described in his own words. ‘I am verily,’ he said to the Jews at Jerusalem, ‘a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia,

yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous towards God as ye all are this day.' He was brought up, he says, in Jerusalem, and taught by Gamaliel, one of the most famous doctors or teachers of that time, so that he was well acquainted with the laws of the Jews, and with their traditions respecting it; and as he says in another place, 'according to the straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee.' Nor did he study merely the ceremonial part of the law, but was what we should call in common language a good and conscientious man: again he describes his early life by saying, 'Touching the righteousness which is in the law, I was blameless.' And because he loved the law in which he had been bred up, and had a great reverence for its minutest ordinances, and thought that the most eminent teachers of the law could not err, therefore he was very angry with the Christians, who declared that Jesus of Nazareth, whom the teachers and rulers of the Jews had crucified as a deceiver, was really the Son of God; and who declared further, or were accused of declaring,—'that this Jesus should destroy the holy place at Jerusalem, and should change the customs which Moses had given to the people of Israel.' These things seemed to Paul such great profaneness, that, as we heard him say in the lesson of this morning, he persecuted the way of Christ unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

There are and have been many good men like St. Paul, who respecting and loving the Church in which they have been brought up, and being fondly attached to its minutest forms, and regarding with the fondest reverence the wise and learned men who have in times past and present been its ornaments, have, like him, been very angry with all those who have differed from them, and have

sometimes, when they have had the power, persecuted them even to death. So the Roman Catholics dealt with the martyrs of our Church, with Latimer and with Ridley ; and so did the zealots of our Church deal,—not persecuting indeed to the death, but delivering him into prison for twelve years,—with that true and earnest servant of Christ, whose writings have been the delight and edification of so many of us, both in youth and age ; the author, I mean, of the Pilgrim's Progress, John Bunyan.

Now what was Paul's fault in this matter, and what the fault of other good men who have in later times acted in the same way ? The fault in all these cases is the same,—it is the putting the lighter things on a level with the greater,—the ordinances of man on a level with the eternal will of God. The law of the Israelites declared that he who blasphemed God should be stoned : the Jews stoned Stephen because they said he had spoken blasphemous words against the holy place and against the law ; although, as they might have known, he was as far from blaspheming God as they were. And so Paul persecuted the Christians for calling Jesus of Nazareth the Son of God, when the rulers and chief priests had declared him a deceiver ; although the Christians, as Paul himself afterwards found, ' according to the way which he then called heresy, so worshipped the God of their fathers, believing all things which were written in the law and the prophets.' Thus in later times, the Church of Rome and the Church of England punished men for not complying with their ordinances, nor acknowledging their authority ; although the men so made to suffer, worshipped all the time the God of their fathers, and believed in His Son Jesus Christ, and in all things which are written in the law and the prophets, in the Gospels and in the Epistles.

But it pleased God to call Paul to a truer knowledge

of himself and of God's will. And that very Jesus whom he persecuted, appeared to him from heaven on his way to Damascus, and touched his heart, so that he repented and believed. Then from that day all the things which were gain to him, he counted loss for Christ; he no longer placed his hope in his obedience to the law, which, though blameless according to the common language of men, could not endure the judgment of the most holy God. From this time forth his hope was fixed on Christ; because Christ had died and had risen again he knew that God had forgiven him; and faith, which worketh by love, made him give up his whole life to the service of God, and of Christ who had died for him.

After his conversion he did not live with the Apostles of Jerusalem, but passed his time at Damascus, at his native city Tarsus, and afterwards at Antioch. Antioch was a great city in Syria, lying to the north of the Holy Land. He was living at Antioch as a prophet or preacher in the church there, when the Holy Ghost said, 'Separate me Barnabas and Paul for the work whereunto I have called them.' So Barnabas and Paul went forth on their first journey, to make known the name of Christ to the Gentiles. They went over to the island of Cyprus, then passed through several parts of Asia Minor, and after having converted many, and founded churches in every place where they had taught, they returned again to Antioch. This is called St. Paul's first journey; and you will find the particulars of it in the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of the Acts.

After some time, Paul proposed to Barnabas that they should pay a second visit to the churches which they had founded; but as Barnabas wished to take with them a relation of his own of whom Paul did not approve, they parted, and Paul set out with another companion, Silas or Silvanus, the same whose name is joined with his own in the beginning of the two epistles to the Thessalonians.

Paul and Silas began their journey through Asia Minor ; and at Lystra, the place where on his former journey he and Barnabas had been worshipped as gods, they found Timotheus, at that time a very young man, whose grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice were Jewesses, and had taught him from a child to know the Holy Scriptures ; that is, the only part of them which was then written, the Old Testament. It appears that his mother and he were already Christians, and now Paul wished him to be his companion on his journeys. So Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus now went on their way together.

They had gone through great part of Asia Minor, and intended to travel over the rest of it ; but the Holy Spirit had other purposes for them. They were in Troas, that part of Asia Minor which is nearest to Europe ; and Paul had a vision in the night, and saw a man of Macedonia, (the part of Europe nearest to where he then was,) standing before him, and praying him, saying, ‘Come over into Macedonia and help us.’ So Paul, understanding from this that it was Christ’s will that he should cross over into Europe, took ship, and landed on the coast of Macedonia.

This was the first introduction of the Gospel into Europe ; and it is a point in the Christian history which to all Europeans is of the greatest interest. The first European church which Paul and his companions founded was that of Philippi, and here it seems they were first joined by St. Luke, who wrote the Acts of the Apostles : for in his account of what passed at Philippi he first uses the terms ‘we’ and ‘us,’ showing that the writer was one of the persons of whom he is speaking. You may observe this in the sixteenth chapter of the Acts ; and it seems further that Luke remained at Philippi for some time afterwards, for the terms ‘we’ and ‘us’ do not again occur till the twentieth chapter, when Paul, passing again through

Philippi on his way to Asia, took Luke with him ; and after that he remained with him during several years.

From Philippi, Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus went on to Thessalonica, and to Athens, and to Corinth. Paul stayed eighteen months at Corinth, and it was during his stay there that he wrote his two Epistles to the Thessalonians, the earliest in date of all his Epistles. He speaks to them of their recent conversion, when he had been so lately in their city, and of the persecution which both he and they had to endure for Christ's sake.

From Corinth, Paul went back to Asia Minor ; and after having gone up to Jerusalem and to Antioch, he returned to the western coast again, and stayed for more than two years at Ephesus. Here there happened that remarkable tumult excited by Demetrius the silversmith, whose trade of making images was hurt by the spread of Christianity. During this long stay at Ephesus, Paul wrote his two Epistles to the Corinthians.

Again Paul crossed over into Europe, and passed three months more in Greece. From Corinth at this time he wrote his Epistle to the Romans, which is remarkable for its containing a more complete and general view of Christianity than any other of his Epistles, because he had never yet visited Rome, and had no particular or personal matters on which to write to them. In that Epistle he mentions his intention of going up immediately to Jerusalem with a collection of money made by the Greek Christians for the poor Christians at Jerusalem ; after which he tells them that he hoped to visit them at Rome, and pass on into Spain to preach the Gospel there. When he had done his work in Spain, he purposed to return to Rome and pass some time with the church there ; and so fully did he think that his labours in Asia were ended, and that the rest of his life would be passed in the west of Europe, that on his way to Jerusalem, when he stopped at Miletus and there

gave his farewell address to the elders of the church of Ephesus, he told them that they all, among whom he had gone preaching the kingdom of God, should see his face no more.

But it pleased God to order it otherwise. He was seized by the Jews at Jerusalem on a charge of having brought Greeks into the temple, and being an enemy to the law and customs of his nation ; and, as he had inherited from his father the privileges of a Roman citizen, he chose to avail himself of them, and to claim to be tried, not by the Jews, but by the Roman government. But the Roman governors in Judæa at that time cared little for justice ; and, after Paul had been kept a prisoner for two years, he appealed to the judgment of the Emperor himself, and was therefore sent to Rome. On his voyage he was shipwrecked on the island of Melita, or Malta ; but he reached Rome at last in safety ; and, as he still could not obtain a hearing, he was kept a prisoner at Rome for two years at least, and probably for more. During this imprisonment he wrote his Epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians, and the Epistle to Philemon.

And now, as the Acts of the Apostles reaches no farther than to the end of the second year of his imprisonment at Rome, we have no particular account of what happened to him afterwards. Only it appears, that during the five or six years of his imprisonment in Judæa and at Rome the churches which he had planted in Asia were greatly corrupted ; so that when at last he did obtain his liberty, instead of going on to Spain as he had formerly purposed, he was obliged to return to the east. It was now that he sent Timotheus to Ephesus and Titus to Crete, giving them full powers to correct the evils of the Church in those places, and to appoint new elders on whom they could rely, and who might instruct and guide the people in the true faith and practice of Christ's Gospel. The First Epistle

to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus belong to this later period of St. Paul's life, when he visited Asia again, after his first imprisonment at Rome.

And now still, though in old age, retaining his Christian zeal undiminished, he returned again to the West, hoping perhaps still to fulfil his desire of preaching the Gospel in Spain. Whether he did so or not, we know not; but either on his way thither or on his return, he was again seized at Rome and cast into prison as a Christian. It was at the time that the Emperor Nero was putting the Christians to death in great numbers, so that Paul had no prospect of escape. He now wrote his Second Epistle to Timothy,—in which he says that he is now ready to be offered, that he has fought the good fight, that he has finished his course, and kept the faith. And soon afterwards his words were fulfilled, and he was put to death in Rome for the name of the Lord Jesus.

Thus I have given an outline of the life of this holy Apostle, and shown when and under what circumstances most of his Epistles were written. The date of those to the Galatians and to the Hebrews is so uncertain, that I could not bring them in with confidence at any one particular period of his life; but with respect to the others there is no doubt, and it greatly helps our understanding of them if we connect them with the circumstances of their writer's history.

I have given you an outline of his life, and that in itself tells us his character. For it tells us that from the prime of manhood to old age he gave himself wholly to setting forth the name of Christ; that is, to the exalting God's glory and to the saving of men's souls. And if we wish to know at one view what sort of sacrifices this work required of him, read his own declaration of what he had suffered in the eleventh chapter of the Second Corinthians; only remembering that, as that epistle was written before his

imprisonment in Judæa and at Rome, it can only contain the sufferings of a part of his life ; and that five years of imprisonment, shipwreck, another imprisonment, and finally martyrdom, are to be added to the account there given. Nor must we forget that which came on him daily, the care of all the churches. For we must not think of St. Paul as of a missionary who preached or read to the people in different places, and having taught them about Christ, went on and left them to themselves. His duties were those of a ruler quite as much as of a preacher. He founded churches everywhere ; that is, societies of men whose whole lives were to be regulated by his directions ; for whose good order he was to provide ; and whose faults affected him with the deepest personal concern. Read in the First Epistle to the Corinthians the various questions proposed to him for answer ; and consider, if one church furnished him with so much matter for thought and regulation, what must have been the care of regulating all the churches of Europe and most of those in Asia ? Such was Paul's life of labour and of suffering ; labour both of body and mind ; suffering both of body and mind. And then, if we observe the spirit and cheerfulness which prevail in all his Epistles, down to the very last,—the calmness, the fervent love, the impartial and clear-judging reason, without the slightest mixture of fanatical violence or folly,—we shall understand how wonderful are the graces of Christ's Spirit ; that He is at once wisdom and power and love ; and being such, and changing His servants into His own image, they also are full of wisdom and power and love, after their measure ; and therefore have in them also a peace of God that passeth all understanding, and a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

SERMON XXXVII.

ST. JOHN.

2 JOHN 5.

And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

I ENDEAVOURED last Sunday to give a sort of outline of the life of St. Paul, and to connect most of his Epistles with their date, and with the circumstances under which they were written. The second lesson for this evening's service is the Second Epistle of St. John, and the day before yesterday was St. John's day; so that the Apostle St. John is now as naturally brought before our minds, as the Apostle St. Paul was last Sunday. It is true, we have it not in our power to give St. John's history with the same fulness as St. Paul's; neither can we so certainly fix the period of his writings, nor connect them so distinctly with the circumstances of his life. But there must be a benefit surely in collecting together every thing that we can know about him, and in tracing out as much as can be discovered to illustrate his writings; inasmuch as if we ask who St. John was, the answer is, that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved; and if we ask what are his writings, we know that in them there is so eminent a measure of divine truth, that he was called by way of eminence in ancient times, 'the Apostle who spoke of God.'

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were, as we all

know, fishermen on the lake of Gennesaret or sea of Galilee, when our Lord called them to be His disciples. We all know also that they, with Peter, were alone with Him when He was transfigured on the Mount, that they alone were with Him when He raised Jairus' daughter from the dead, and that they alone witnessed His agony in the garden of Gethsemane. After His resurrection and ascension, it was by Peter and John that the first miracle was wrought in His name, the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple; and several years later, when St. Paul went up to Jerusalem to communicate with the Apostles, he addressed himself particularly to Peter, and James the brother of our Lord, and to John; who, as he says, were accounted pillars in the church. This is the last scriptural mention of St. John that is free from all doubt and uncertainty; but what I have noticed is enough to show that from the beginning of the Gospel onwards, St. John was ever regarded as among the most eminent of our Lord's disciples.

But this is not all:—we know also that St. John had the highest and most awful privilege ever bestowed upon any human being, for he was in a peculiar manner the disciple whom Jesus loved. It were profaneness to attempt to dwell on this point further than merely to notice it; but if we ask for what purpose it was recorded in the Scripture, and how without any profane curiosity we may yet regard it with benefit,—the answer is, that this simple statement, together with what is said of our Lord's love for Lazarus and Martha and Mary, is the highest and most precious sanction for our own feelings of personal friendship and affection, as distinct from our general brotherly love or benevolence. The general language of the Scripture enforces general charity,—love to our brethren, that is, to our fellow Christians,—love to our neighbour, that is, to all our fellow men. It was needful that we should

have a Divine command for this, because we are so apt to fail in it; but we do not need to be commanded to feel personal regard or love for one or more individuals, for to this Nature herself prompts us. Lest however we should think that this was no more than an instinct of corrupt nature, which our renewed nature should endeavour to overcome, it has been recorded that of this feeling our Lord Himself was a partaker; that He who so loved us all that He laid down His life for our sakes, yet had those also for whom He entertained a particular and, if I may venture so to speak, a personal affection; that John was the disciple whom Jesus loved.

But when the mother of James and John ventured to ask for her sons that they might be exalted next to Christ Himself when He came in His kingdom, His answer was,—‘To sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but it shall be given to those for whom it is prepared.’ ‘It is not mine to give in the way in which it is now asked,—as an earthly prince might give honours to his favourites out of partiality or private regard, but it shall be given to those for whom it is prepared of my Father;—my judgment will be the judgment of Him who searcheth the reins and the hearts.’

Infinite is the difference of feeling with which we should regard the greatest Apostle, or her who was highly favoured and blessed among women, and Jesus Christ our Lord, both God and man. Let us respect and love the characters of prophets and apostles; let us consider with awe and gratitude unspeakable that love to man which did not abhor the Virgin’s womb; but let us beware, as of the most certain idolatry, of that superstitious reverence which, separating the Prophets and Apostles and the Virgin Mary from all others of God’s faithful servants, does really regard them with something of religious veneration,—with feelings I do not say the same in degree, but actually the

same in kind, with those which we entertain towards our Lord. Nor let us be deceived with fond words, telling us that such veneration bespeaks an humble and reverent mind, such as becomes Christ's disciples, and that to refuse it is cold, and hard, and proud. For these are fond words, like those of the same sort of men in St. Paul's days, who in their supposed voluntary humility tried to persuade Christ's people to worship angels. If simple reverence or veneration be a Christian virtue, without reference to the claims of the object, then he who bows down before a thousand idols exercises more Christian virtue than he who worships God alone. One is our master, even Christ, and all we are brethren:—all we, Prophets and Apostles included,—all we are brethren.

Did Christ mean that we should respect all men alike, or that we should think none better or wiser than ourselves?—God forbid! But He did mean that we should think none so much better or wiser than ourselves as to forget their infirmities, as to bestow on them any the slightest portion of religious honour: that is, to suppose that they by reason of their holiness can obtain favour for us from God: that they sit on Christ's right hand and on His left, nearer to Him who judges than to us who are to be judged. When we so regard them it becomes idolatry;—we give to man the honour due to God only. We shall all stand before Christ's judgment-seat; we have all need of His atonement, of His mediation; to seek help from one another, or to pretend to offer it to one another, is alike blasphemy.

It is necessary to say thus much, because this idolatrous regard for the Apostles, and even for other Christians far less eminent, is beginning to increase amongst us; and besides all its other evils it has this which is not of small importance, that it hinders us from studying the Apostles' characters as those of men like ourselves, and thus of

deriving benefit from the faithful picture recorded in Scripture of their faults no less than of their virtues. For instance, it is recorded of St. John that when he saw a man casting out devils in Christ's name without following Him as a disciple, he forbade him. And again, when the inhabitants of a Samaritan village refused to receive our Lord and His disciples, John asked, 'whether he should call for fire to come down and consume them, even as Elijah did.' You see that in St. John's early life, no less than in St. Paul's, there was a zeal not according to knowledge,—a zeal which leads not to goodness and wisdom, but to error and to sin. Is it irreverent to these two blessed Apostles, to whom we owe more than to any two mere men who ever lived upon earth, thus to venture to notice their defects?—Nay rather, to refuse to notice them were an irreverence to that Holy Spirit which has recorded them for our instruction.

But observe now, if these great Apostles, so unlike in many respects, had yet in their early life this same fault of over and misguided zeal, may we not think that there is something in zeal, even when in error, which promises well at least for future excellence;—that theirs is not a hopeful state who are wholly without it, or, to speak more properly, who are zealous only for their own interest and their own pleasure? And when we see again how this false zeal, in both St. Paul and St. John, was purified by God's Spirit from its error and its evil,—that it was no more narrow-minded, no more violent, but wise and gentle, yet still earnest withal and fervent; directing its abhorrence only against wickedness, and not against differences or even against errors in things of no moral importance; and even against wickedness, striving not with the fire from heaven, nor with the high priest's power to bind and to imprison, but with patience and reproof,—and moral influence only; then we may learn how our natural quali-

ties may be perfected by Christ's Spirit,—how in us too, our false and violent zeal, if such be our defect, may be purified and softened,—how our false and selfish indifference, if that be our fault rather, may be strengthened and enkindled into the holy flame of Christian charity.

St. John's later life was passed in Asia Minor; and it was there, according to all appearance, that his Gospel and Epistles were written. The exact date of either cannot be fixed; but the Epistles cannot be placed earlier than the period of St. Paul's first imprisonment at Rome; and probably both the Epistles and Gospel were written still later, during St. Paul's second imprisonment or after his death. It is quite clear that his Gospel was designed for those who were already familiar with the principal events and discourses of our Lord's ministry; that his Epistles refer to a period when Christianity had been for some time in the world; when, as in our own days, many were Christians in name who were not so in reality. In this respect St. John's Epistles are a painful contrast to the earlier Epistles of St. Paul, in which he delights to consider all those to whom he is writing as the heirs of eternal life, and cannot bear to think that either height, or depth, or any other creature, can ever separate from the love of Christ those hearts which have once believed in Him. But St. John is obliged to warn the Christians of his time, that they might not dare to indulge such hopes of all who bore Christ's name. 'Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as Christ is righteous.'

It is universally allowed that St. John lived to a great age; insomuch that, as years passed away, the impression grounded on a misinterpretation of our Lord's words, that he should not die at all, gained strength, and he himself in his Gospel thought it expedient to contradict it. He outlived the destruction of Jerusalem, still remaining in

Asia Minor, and principally at or near Ephesus. There, in extreme old age, he still continued to repeat that favourite lesson which we find so often in his Epistles, 'Little children, love one another.' And a story is told that when some one asked him why he confined himself to saying the same thing, he answered, 'Because that one thing contains everything.' This is the fitting conclusion surely of the life of that Apostle whom Jesus loved.

Let me add, in conclusion, a few words more with respect to St. John's Gospel. I have said before that it was designed for those who were familiar with the principal events and discourses of our Lord's ministry; for it mentions scarcely any of those recorded by the other Evangelists, and only notices six miracles in all, although in one or two places it speaks of our Lord as having wrought a great number. So again, it leaves out the Sermon on the Mount and most of the parables, which having been early recorded and reported by several writers were already well known; but it gives many particular conversations, and especially those held by our Lord in Jerusalem, former writers having noticed principally such as took place in Galilee. And still more, the earlier accounts of our Lord's life had confined themselves to a history, in the common sense of the word, of what took place during His earthly ministry; some, as we see by St. Mark's Gospel, went back no farther than His baptism, while those who went back farthest, still related only the circumstances of His birth and its miraculous announcement. The earlier Evangelists spoke of Jesus of Nazareth, a Prophet mighty in word and deed, the son of David, wonderfully born of a virgin, whom the chief priests and scribes rejected, whom Pilate crucified, and whom God raised from the dead. But St. John was to tell more than this; he was to enter as it were within the veil; to go back to times, if I may so speak, before time was; to speak

not only of things done on earth, but of the things of heaven. Hence his Gospel opens with declaring that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God: that by Him all things were made; and that he became flesh, and dwelt among us.

With St. John, therefore, our Lord's resurrection is something more than a mere rising from death to life; it is Christ's return to that Divinity which He had before the world was, and which for our sakes He for a while veiled in our nature; and thus the last thing recorded in his Gospel,—for the twenty-first chapter is clearly an addition made by him at a later period,—the last thing recorded is the confession of the Apostle Thomas, when he believed that Christ was truly risen and said unto Him, 'My Lord, and my God.' Thus Christ was acknowledged upon earth to be what St. John in the beginning of his Gospel had declared Him to be from all eternity; and the words of Thomas, at the end of the twentieth chapter, do but repeat the truth which St. John had stated before in his own words in the beginning of the first.

Such is St. John's Gospel, the main pillar of our faith and hope, the most effectual enkindler of our love. It stands perfect alike as an historical witness, and as a divine teacher: the work of one who heard, and saw with his eyes, and looked upon, and whose hands handled, that Eternal Life of whom he wrote; the work of one whom Jesus loved; whom the Holy Spirit endued with wisdom and with power; power over outward evil and over inward,—wisdom which understood all mysteries and all knowledge. The wisdom and the power were given him for our sakes, for the confirmation of our faith, and the increase of our spiritual knowledge. But wisdom and power, even such as belonged to an inspired Apostle, must cease and vanish away. St. John possessed also that spirit

of love which never faileth. And he whose latest exhortation was, ‘Little children, love one another,’ was and is an example of the truth of his own words, that ‘he who dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.’

BRATHAY CHAPEL:

December 29, 1839.

SERMON XXXVIII.

ALL SAINTS.

REVELATION vii. 9, 10.

After this I beheld, and lo ! a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands : and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

WE heard these words read this morning in the Epistle for this day, the Festival of All Saints ; the Festival, that is, which the Church keeps in commemoration, not of any one or two of her members, as is the case with the rest of what are called Saints' days, but of all God's people ; of her whole communion, both past and present, reaching back to the remotest times, and extending to the farthest countries. Amongst those whom she this day commemorates, Patriarch and Apostle, Prophet and Preacher, Jew and Gentile, Asiatic and European, old and young, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, are met together ; amidst innumerable differences, nay, too often amidst fierce controversies, one thing alone is to be remembered of them this day, that they were God's people, living and dying in His faith and fear, and supported by His Spirit in a lifelong warfare against His enemy.

And those whom God has so joined together let no man put asunder. True it is, that as one star differeth

from another star in glory, so the services rendered by all this blessed company to their one great cause have been by no means equal: true it is also, that there have been points in the lives and in the doctrine of all of them which have done their great cause injury. There are many amongst them who have built hay and stubble upon Christ's foundation, or who valued it so highly when it had been built by others, that they have been very bitter in their feelings and conduct towards those who wished to clear it away. It might be done, indeed,—but it were a thankless labour—to look over the list of God's saints, of those, I mean, whose lives and minds are in any way known to us, and to notice the blemishes in each; how some, according to their several constitutions of mind and circumstances, have omitted duly to cultivate one virtue, and others have omitted to cultivate another; how some have too much neglected some great truth, whilst others have raised to the level of truth, or even above it, some monstrous error: how some have been very zealous for much that was evil, while others have been too cold towards much that was good. Above all, it would be possible, but very painful, to mark so often their alienation from each other; how they mistook each other for enemies, and shunned each other's society; insomuch that, as in the sad story of the contention between Paul and Barnabas, they parted altogether from one another, and instead of doing the Lord's work together they each were obliged to do it alone. All these things might be noticed, and history must notice them. But with all this, there is another point no less true, which is equally matter of history, and which it is far more profitable to us to contemplate,—that with all this difference, nay, with all the sense of discord which actually may have prevailed, there was in all, even where they themselves observed it not, a secret harmony: all were Christ's soldiers and Satan's

enemies ; all, in that great struggle between good and evil which has gone on in the world since man's first sin, were, according to their measure, fighting on the side of good.

Therefore now, when all have entered into their rest together, and they who were parted from one another here, find to their exceeding joy that they must needs be one for evermore, inasmuch as they each are one with Christ,—let not the Church dwell upon their differences, nor attempt to fix which of them shall sit nearest to Christ, on His right hand and on His left ; but let us consider them all with thankfulness and great joy, giving thanks for them earnestly to God, their Father and ours, that He has magnified His grace in them, and made them conquerors over sin and death ; and praying that we may be added to their number, and that we too may be a subject for thankfulness and not for sorrow to the generations which shall come after us.

These are the general feelings which this day should awaken in us. It gives a sort of consistency to the pleasure with which we read of good men in various ages and countries ; it bids us unite them all together in thought, and to view them as enjoying that perfect good which by faith they formerly saw and loved. But besides this general joy, there are also many particular trains of thought connected with this festival, too full to be exhausted now, but some of which it will be proper to notice and for a certain distance at least to follow.

We have acknowledged, what is indeed most evident, that there have been great differences amongst God's saints, and that many of them have been marked by some great sins. What is there then in them which makes us regard them as so essentially united, and as being undoubtedly, notwithstanding their sins, received into the kingdom of God ? One of the most striking and most

universally known instances of what I mean is the character of David. We all know that his life was stained with two sins in particular, such as even common men rarely commit, adultery and murder. And yet we know the language in which the Scripture generally speaks of him, and to which the judgments and hearts of Christians, who abhor those sins most earnestly, have yet borne constant witness. Other instances might be given in great numbers, but this one sufficiently shows the nature of the question. What is that in human nature which emphatically entitles a man to the name of good? with which, although he may have committed great sins, he still belongs to God's true people: without which, although his life may be marked by no direct evil nearly so flagrant, he does not and cannot belong to them?

Now the Scripture, I think, will at once suggest the words of our answer: we should say in the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that what distinguishes God's people from those who are not God's people, was the presence of faith on the one hand, or its absence on the other. And this would be a true answer; but, as so given, it would not be a clear one. For we may be asked, what is faith? as the word has undoubtedly been used in many various senses, and what is very truly said of it in one sense, may be most untrue when said of it in another. And therefore this short and simple answer, that faith is the great moral distinguisher between man and man, cannot be left in its shortness and simplicity; we must add to it by explaining it, or else it may well be that we shall gain from it no true instruction.

We will say then, that the faith which we mean may be substantially described as a coming to and walking with God: or, if we like it better in other words,—a firm and present conviction that the great business of life is to please God, and to fulfil all righteousness; so that

habitually the man is trying to please God, and therefore his life being judged of by its habitual and prevailing tenor, we call him holy and good. And as on the one hand it is clear, that this habitual principle may occasionally be driven from its command over our lives by some strong temptation, and that in its absence the worst of sins may be committed, so it is no less clear, that where it is habitually absent, other motives may so far supply its place as to save us from flagrant sins such as men commonly abhor and punish. We may be perfectly without faith, and yet be restrained from adultery and murder, either from the absence of temptation or by the fear of human censure or human law. But then the great difference between one who has faith and one who has not, is this,—that in the common and habitual course of their lives, the one is trying to please God, and the other to please himself; that is, that the one is consciously and by preference enlisted as it were amongst God's soldiers; his business and his pleasure is to do God service, so that he must assuredly belong to God. Whereas the other is never amongst God's soldiers, and is never consciously and by preference advancing God's service. He may indeed be doing God's service unconsciously; that is, he may from some other motive be doing the same things which he would have done had he wished to serve God. But although it may thus happen that his works sometimes serve God, yet he himself never serves Him; and, therefore, when he himself is judged he is found not to belong to God's people, for he cares nothing about God.

Here, then, as it appears to me, we have the one common point in all that great company of which the text speaks, who out of all nations and languages stand before the throne of God, and are clothed in white, and bear in their hands palms of victory. For all these have, through the faith that was in them, overcome the world: they

lived neither to please the world nor to please themselves, but to please God. And it is thus very easy for us to judge whether we truly belong to their communion, and are with them in spirit now, and may hope to be with them both in body and in spirit hereafter. If we have their faith in us, then we are one with them; but if we have not, we are strangers to them. Is the prevailing principle in our hearts a desire to serve and please God? then we are of God's people. Is it, on the contrary, a desire to please ourselves? then we are not God's people.

And this, as I have often said before, is true amongst us without any qualification: for it scarcely ever,—does it indeed ever at all occur amongst us?—that desiring to serve God truly, we mistake His will, and do evil while believing it to be good. On the contrary, here, if there is a real desire to do God's will, our path is as clear as day; no one mistakes it, no one can mistake it. The evil which is most common here, whatever other fair semblances it may put on, can never pretend to be the way in which we should please God. Take all the faults to which we are ever tempted,—those of which I have spoken so often, those which you know so well,—and think whether any one could ever persuade himself that they were the way in which he should do God service. Vice here may have other fine names, but the names of holiness and zeal for God it dares not to meddle with. And therefore as I said, whoever truly wishes to serve God here, in whomsoever this wish is the ruling motive of his actions, he, we may be quite sure, does serve God actually.

For our own use here, therefore, we need not consider those most difficult cases which appear to contradict what I have said as to the distinguishing mark of God's people; those cases, I mean, where men, whose zeal for God seems

manifest on the one hand, have yet on the other hand, not from occasional infirmity and in spite of their principles, but knowingly and as a direct consequence of their principles, committed great crimes. How can we consider him as belonging to God's people, who down to the very last moment of his life has been so blinded as to be deliberately committing sin and counting it God's service? We must confess that there are cases of this sort, which we can only leave to God's righteous judgment; there is a misguided zeal for God which is the punishment of serving our own passions under His name: when our Lord spoke of those who, in killing His disciples, would think that they were doing God service, He added, 'that they would do this because they had neither known the Father nor the Son.' But yet these very cases, although if we were to have to judge of individuals they would occasion us hopeless perplexity, yet do not really touch the principle which we have laid down: for he who serves his own passions under God's name is not serving God, neither he who serves his own prejudices; and where was there ever an instance of any man who really sought to serve God and not an idol, whether in himself or out of himself, whose life was not kept pure from the deadly error of believing evil to be good?

This, however, is a difficulty most affecting a later stage of life than yours. A few years hence indeed, the idol may so cunningly seat itself in the Temple of God, and so invest itself with God's name and authority, as to try your spiritual discernment to the very utmost. But here, at your present time of life, it is not so. To you God is in His holy place, and into that place no idol ventures. To you, the idols before which you bow down are idols as confessed as were ever Moloch, or Dagon, or Remphan; not for one moment do you believe while serving them that you are serving God. To you, then, the turn-

ing to God is a turning to Him in truth ; in your case, faith would put you without doubt among God's people. And if you cannot now turn from what are idols beyond all doubt, nor resolve to serve the living and only God, may not the judgment on this your sin assume two apparently opposite forms, though they are one in their reality ? Some who will not turn from their boy's idols now, will continue to follow man's idols hereafter ; and will neither then nor now ever pretend to turn to God, or to belong to His people. But others may find their judgment to be of another sort ; that as now they would not leave what they knew to be an idol, so at a later period of life, when they would turn to God, they may be deceived by an idol under His name ; that thus, whilst believing that they are serving Him, they will, in fact, be idolaters no less than now,—hating truth and justice, and worshipping a lie in truth's place,—persecuting God's people, while they think that they are doing God service ;—and this, because they have neither known the Father nor the Son, but have worshipped idols all their days ; wilfully and knowingly first, and afterwards by that judgment of God which takes the power of sight from those who had refused to use it.

RUGBY CHAPEL :

November 1, 1840.

SERMON XXXIX.

ALL SOULS.

HEBREWS xiii. 7.

Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

It is probably known to many of us that, in the Roman Catholic calendar, every day in the year is a Saint's day; that is, there is no single day with which the name and remembrance of some persons or events connected with our common faith are not associated. And it is known also perhaps to many of us, that some Protestant churches keep no anniversaries at all; not even those of our Lord's birth, crucifixion, and ascension. The Sunday is their only day set apart for religious worship, with the exception of such particular fasts or solemn days as may be appointed by the Church from time to time on particular occasions. Our own Church, as we know, keeps several anniversaries, while it has discontinued the greater number of those formerly observed. Among the rest so discontinued, is that one which used to be kept on this day. Yesterday, which was All Saints' Day, is still observed. But All Saints' Day was followed immediately by what was called All Souls' Day, or the Day of the Dead,—a day which was indeed made to serve to very superstitious purposes, on account of the fables which were invented about the state of the dead, but which, as soon as those fables are forgotten, is capable of being made a truly Christian

solemnity, no less so than the Day of All Saints immediately preceding it, and which our Church still observes.

The notion of All Souls' Day was to keep up the remembrance of those of our Christian brethren who, having finished their course on earth, are kept in peace till the day of the resurrection. Undoubtedly, as I said before, very gross superstitions were mixed up with it, which it would be most unedifying to dwell on even for a moment. Still the state of the Christian dead, both in what we know of it and in what we do not know, is itself a very useful subject of reflection. In the celebration of All Saints' Day, we recall to mind our fellowship with God's servants in respect of their and our immortality. The Day of the Dead recalls to us our fellowship with God's servants, in so far as both they and we are mortal. In the former we include not only all Christ's earthly servants, but those also who are in heaven. The Communion of Saints extends to the holy angels themselves, and centres in Christ Himself, their Head and Lord as well as ours. But the Day of the Dead is in a manner of the earth and earthly. The holy angels do not share in this communion with us; and though Christ Himself died unto sin once, yet He is alive for evermore, and entered already into the most holy place, to prepare an habitation there for us also when He shall come again. The Day of the Dead then is the day of those who are yet in some measure under Death's power,—of our departed brethren who are yet so far under it, that they have not entered into their perfect and eternal life,—of ourselves even more, over whose heads Death's dart is still hanging, who have not felt its stroke, but will surely feel it.

So far then our departed brethren and we are in the same condition;—to neither of us is the power of the last enemy as yet quite overcome. But if in this we are

alike, there is another thing in which we are most different. The power of death is not wholly past from over them ; but the sting of that power is past for ever. They have done with sin, if they have not yet done with death. But of us this cannot be said truly. We have not yet done with sin, and therefore to us, not only the power but the worst sting of death may be yet remaining. How can we then become like in this great matter to our departed brethren ? How can we bring ourselves to feel no more or worse portion of death's power than they now feel ? To this question the words of the text afford the answer : ' Consider the end of their conversation, the issue of their earthly life, and imitate their faith.'

In speaking of our departed brethren, I wish the term to be confined to those who have died in Christ's faith and fear. We have nothing to do with any others than these. Now of some of these we must gain our knowledge from reading or hearing ; of others our own experience may inform us. For among that number of persons whom we once knew on earth and who have now finished their course, there must surely be many of whom we may pronounce at once quite confidently, with much more than the mere hope of charity, that they have died in Christ's faith and fear. For, as there must be many of whom we may hope not only charitably, but reasonably, yet of whom we cannot feel that their faith, as it were, is manifest, and goes before to judgment,—so there must be many, I trust, of whom we feel that it was manifest ; whom God's Spirit had sealed so visibly that none could mistake its impress. Now consider for a moment the state of any such person whom we have once known, and compare his case with ours. We knew him when he was as we are now ; with the world around him as it is around us ; with temptations besetting him as they are besetting us ; with the same weaknesses of body and mind under which we too are

labouring. Consider that to him life was as real, and all its interests as pressing, as they can be this day to us. If he were nearly of our own age, we may well remember many occasions of ordinary employment or amusement or conversation, in which he shared our interest, and in which we no more thought of death in connection with him than with ourselves. So truly and entirely was there a sympathy between us, in respect to what we see and feel now. But to him this 'now' is gone by for ever. To him the world is really nothing. We can see how wise he was not to set his heart upon it,—how short and vanishing a point is the life of faith when compared with the life of glory. Whatever pain he suffered, whatever common pleasure he enjoyed, we have seen the end of both. It may be that we retain some of his books or of his letters; his handwriting is before our eyes, the subject of his thoughts in his books, their expression in his writing. He used these things as not abusing them; and can we not readily carry our minds forward to the moment when the like memorials of us may be in the hands of our friends; and can we not fancy the infinite wretchedness of our case if even loving friends could only hope, and not feel confidently sure, that neither had we abused them?

And where are our departed friends now? I can answer only by one word, but how much does that word contain! I cannot tell in what place they are, or with what degree of happiness or consciousness. I cannot tell if they regard us still, or if they can pray for us, or wish us any good. But they are in *safety*. O comfortable word to think of, when the danger so escaped is an eternal one? They are in safety; they have done with evil for ever. No more sickness, no more pain, no more sorrow for others, and no more fear; no more sense of private misfortunes or of public. Poverty, strifes, tumults, wars,—whatever images

of evil, with more or less of distinctness, haunt us in our mortal condition,—of all these they know nothing any more. But how much more than all this is it to be freed from temptation, and to have ended the work of faith? We, with all our faults, with all our difficulties in the way of serving God, our eager passions, our base fears, our childish follies,—we, with this veil drawn so thickly over us, and through which faith sometimes can scarcely penetrate, can we conceive ourselves to be as our departed brethren,—passions and fears and follies all swept away together, and the veil lifted up from all things, so that we can see God? And yet it is true that many whom we have known, who have shared our graver hours and our lighter ones, are now as really in this state of perfect safety as they were a short time since, and as we are still, in danger.

It is therefore well said, ‘Follow their faith, considering the end of their earthly conversation.’ It is well said; for by considering their end we may be best encouraged to follow their faith. You will see that when speaking of considering their end, I have not dwelt on the actual scene of their deaths, on any particular instances of faith which they may then have exhibited, or any particular parting charges which they may then have left to us. The truth is, that the real example is to be sought for in their lives, not in their deaths. The real solemnity of their relation to us consists, not in the greater or less impressiveness of a period of a few hours, but in the abiding fact that they were alive and are dead. Besides it often happens that they whose lives have been the holiest, of whose safety now we may be most assured, exhibited nothing remarkable in their last hours, from the peculiar nature of their disorder. And it is of importance not to encourage that craving for stories of interesting deaths, which some feel so strongly. In this respect there seems to me to be a

peculiar fitness and value in the manner of the death of Bishop Heber. For all that we know of him is his life and vigorous health ;—there his example speaks to us ; and as his simple devotion to his Master's service showed itself in his life, in all fruits of power and love and of a sound mind, so it was ordered that neither in his death should he minister to any false or extravagant feeling. We have no record of his faith and hope when his body was sick and his mind enfeebled ; but we have an abundant record of both, while he was daily and cheerfully giving up to his Master's work all the energies of his undecayed body, and all the manifold faculties of his pure and beautiful mind.

The mention of this great and good man naturally leads me from those of our departed brethren whom we have ourselves known, to that great multitude whom we can know only from the accounts of others. They are scattered up and down over the whole period of the world's existence ; but yet, so soon as they are taken from this world, they have no more to do with time. All of them stand to us now in one common relation,—all are the dead who have died in the Lord. How refreshing is it to join ourselves in the only permitted way to their communion ? Not by asking or wondering what they may be now, whether they care for us, whether they can do anything for us ; all that we may know concerning them now, is that they are safe and under Christ's care, and that we shall meet them when Christ comes again. But we can join in communion with them by studying what they were. Often we have their very prayers and secret thoughts preserved to us ; or, if not, we have their actions, which tell clearly enough from what seed so goodly a fruit was ripened. It is very much to be regretted that we have not more records of the lives of Christ's servants ; and sometimes, too, we may be forgiven the wish that what we

have, had been more simply told. Still there is a goodly company of God's people on whom we may look with comfort and thankfulness; who, amidst all varieties of time and place, bear the same divine seal that they were God's redeemed; who, though dead, are yet capable of guiding and of strengthening us; who, though unknown to us in this mortal body, shall yet, when we have all put on immortality, be our companions for ever, if we, too, shall to the end of our lives steadily have followed their faith.

And now this Day of the Dead seems to deserve a better, or at least a more cheerful name:—it may be called the Day of the Living. For who are so truly alive as they who have been, and are, and shall be, God's children;—alive, and truly alive for evermore;—whether, like our brethren, they have passed through the valley of the shadow of death, or, like us, have yet to pass it. But if we must dwell upon the word 'dead,' let us think who there are who truly deserve to be called so. Not those of whom I have been now speaking, not our departed brethren,—and I hope and pray, not ourselves. Dead, indeed, we can scarcely be yet;—as we do not share our departed brethren's safety, so neither can we yet share the death of the truly dead. Here we may not, we dare not, dwell upon individual cases: but if we have ever known,—I would rather say, have ever heard or read of,—some whose faith had given no sign of its existence,—then as we presented to our minds the change that has taken place in our Christian brethren, so for a moment let us fancy the change that has taken place in the really dead. If we have ever known such, alive once, active and healthful, full of powers and opportunities, yet wasting all,—living, alas! but too livelily in this present life, and sharing in its concerns but too eagerly,—can we bear to think what is their state now? No, we may not think of it, except to remind

us that as they are, we may be ; nay, as they are, we shall be ; and others may talk, and draw examples from us, as we do now from these : life will be over with us for ever, and death for ever will have begun, unless even now we join ourselves to those holy dead, to those truly living, whom we as on this day commemorate.

RUGBY CHAPEL :

November 2, 1834.

SERMON XL.

THE HOLY TRINITY.

REVELATION iv. 11.

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power ; for thou hast created all things ; and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

BEFORE we enter any farther into the consideration of these words, it will be proper to notice one expression in them which may perhaps leave a false impression on some minds, from their comparing it with the words of another passage in Scripture. I mean the expression, ‘for thy pleasure ;’ which, by a comparison of what is said of human fathers, in the 12th chapter of the Hebrews, that they ‘chasten their children after their own pleasure,’ may at first seem to convey a notion somewhat at variance with the fatherly love of God. But it should be noticed that the expressions, though so nearly alike in our translation, are not so in the original ; and that what is translated in the text, ‘for thy pleasure,’ would, according to the general practice of our translators, be rather rendered, ‘because of thy will ;’ a difference which strictly speaking indeed comes to nothing, but which, notwithstanding, is of consequence ; as in our language respecting God, the impression conveyed to our minds is of quite as much importance as the actual correctness of the language itself when strictly inquired into.

The text then says, that ‘because it was God’s will, all things are and were created.’ It means to convey to us the notion of God’s entire sovereignty, but apart from anything which in a man we should call capricious and arbitrary. God’s will is a will of infinite justice and wisdom and goodness, and can be no other, because it is the will of God.

‘Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things:’ all things visible and invisible. There is one Maker in the universe, even God, and all things else are His work. There is one Lord in the universe, even God, and all things else are His ministers; whether they be things with life or without life, whether they act by instinct or by will.

But amongst these His ministers,—that is, amongst created beings,—the differences may be greater than we can estimate. Even within our own knowledge, who can measure the difference between a grain of sand and the sun of our system? or between the lowest creature that seems to form the link between the animal and vegetable world, and the mind of Solomon or of Paul? But the differences may be, and indeed are, far greater than these; we do not know to what minuteness, to what humbleness, God’s creation may descend on the one hand, nor to what greatness it may arise on the other; we know not the nature of the smallest created atom, nor of the mightiest angel.

Still all these beings, so different, extending from things lower than we can conceive up to things higher than our conceptions,—all, from the highest angel to the feeblest atom, are yet, religiously speaking, all classed together, as though they were all equal. They are all creatures, and however different when compared with themselves, yet they seem actually to be all on one level when contrasted with that infinite difference which exists

between the highest creature and God. All then are servants, all are ministers; and there is one only Lord and Master of all, whom all may, and all must worship.

But this is a matter of Revelation. Man's natural tendency has been to worship creatures, or rather to worship many beings in an ascending order, some less powerful, others more so; till after many steps, at the end of an almost infinite series, far removed from man's common thoughts and feelings, was the Supreme Father and Ruler of all. That is, man not knowing God, and seeing great varieties actually existing in creation, dwelt more on the differences of lower things amongst themselves than of their common difference with God. But God's revelation came in and said, 'Thou shalt have none other Gods but me.' Thou shalt worship nothing in heaven or in earth, visible or invisible, save Him by whom all things were made, their Lord and thine. This then is the first great work of Revelation, to show us that in all our religious feelings and relations, we have to do with God alone.

But yet Revelation tells us further, that in our religious feelings and relations we have to do with Jesus Christ. For it tells us that to Him all power is given in heaven and in earth, therefore we are living under His government; it tells us that whether we live, we live unto Him, or whether we die, we die unto Him; we are His therefore both here and hereafter; we are told to love Him and to fear Him, though we see Him no more; these are clearly religious feelings.

Does then Revelation undo its own work, and after having laboured to teach us to worship God only, and to lose all differences between creature and creature in the infinite difference between all creatures and their Creator, does it mean again to fix our minds and affections upon a creature,—to bid us love and fear Him religiously, to believe Him and put our trust in Him, to look to Him in

life and in death, as the Lord of heaven and earth;—whereas He no less than ourselves is the work of God's hands, and therefore removed to a far greater distance from God than He can be removed by any superiority of nature from us His fellow-creatures?

Revelation would thus undo its own work, if Jesus Christ of Nazareth were indeed a man and no more. Or go much higher still; exalt Him ever so highly,—above the highest angel, to a perfection which shall to our eyes seem infinite,—still if it be not infinite,—if, however exalted, He be yet only a creature, one of those who were, because it was God's will that they should be,—then also Revelation undoes its own work; then it teaches us practically to have more gods than one; it revives that very instinct of our nature which it had condemned, the aptness, namely, to dwell more upon the differences between the lower creatures and the higher, than on that infinite difference which exists between the highest creature and God, by whom he was created.

But lest we should so conceive, and be involved in such perplexity, Revelation has abundantly justified itself; it has shown that its latest language agrees with its earliest, that the Creator alone is to be worshipped, and no creature, however exalted; that there is still One, the Maker and Lord of all, and all else creatures and servants;—for it has declared that He whom we have known as Jesus Christ, in whom we still believe, and whom we love and fear and worship as the Son of Man, was in truth the Maker of all things, by whom this world in which He vouchsafed to sojourn was itself made; that not this world only, but angels and archangels, and all things visible and invisible, were created by Him as their author, and for Him as their end.

‘Thou art worthy then, O Lord our Redeemer, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for Thou hast created

all things.' Thou art not ashamed to call us brethren, for Thou hast been made in the likeness of man : but Thou art no less our Lord and our God, by whom we and all things were made ; by whom we alone, so far as we know, of all the works of Thy hands, have by a second manifestation of Thy love been made again, when our first life had been by our own act destroyed.

Furthermore, Revelation teaches us that in our religious feelings and relations we have to do with Him whom it calls the Holy Spirit. And here indeed our conceptions are dim, and our words must be most imperfect ; yet there is One who deals with our heart and inmost nature, working in secret, yet with effect most visible ; in us, yet not of us ; and sometimes showing most awfully that He is not *of* us, because He ceases even to be *in* us. Of Him, then, the Spirit of Good, who struggles for us against the spirit of evil, who opens our understandings and softens our tempers, who gives us the heart to pray, and aids us to put up our prayer,—is He a mighty angel who does God's work within us, the Creator of all true life in us, yet Himself the creature of God ? Or has not Revelation here too preserved steadily its own language ? Has it not taught us that the Holy Spirit is no other than He who is alone in the highest sense holy ? that when He breathes to us of the things of God, He breathes to us of Himself, as we cannot separate the spirit of man from our notions of man's nature ? And He too moved on the face of the waters of the deep when this world came into being ; and by Him must we be created anew both in body and soul, before we can enter into the perfect kingdom of God.

' Thou art worthy then, O Lord our Sanctifier, to receive glory, and honour, and power ; for Thou hast created all things.' Thou hast created outward things : mayest Thou so create and raise up our glorified body, that we may be fit for life eternal. But Thou dost work in the inward

heart also: Thou art a Spirit, and Thy work is spirit; create us again inwardly after Thine own image; create in us peace, and faith, and love, and joy; create in us that seed of eternal life which is fit for Thy spiritual kingdom, that our spirits and bodies may be alike Thy work alone.

‘For Thy will, O Lord, we are and were created.’ And what is Thy will concerning us? Is it that we should, according to our various lot, enjoy pleasure or suffer pain for a few years, and then be no more? Is it that we should do useful or mighty works which should remain to after times, prolonging in a manner our life even when we were dead? Or is it that we should be a monument of Thy justice; that being alone of all the thousand worlds which Thou hast made, buried in evil, and turned away from Thee, we should alone be an eternal warning, condemned to bear the fierceness of Thy wrath for ever?

None of these are Thy will towards us, for Thou hast given to us Thy Son and Thy Holy Spirit. If we were but born to enjoy or to suffer for a few years, why should Christ have died for us?—a sacrifice so infinite for an end so small, and which in this respect has not altered our condition, for we enjoy and suffer still; and the good are many times they who suffer, and the evil are they who enjoy? If we were born to do mighty or useful works for after ages, why was the Spirit given, whose works are not of such a kind; while they who do such works, do them many times by a far other spirit than Thine? Above all, if we were born to be a monument of Thy justice, then Thou wouldst have given us neither Thy Son nor Thy Spirit; Thou wouldst not have redeemed those who were born to eternal death; Thou wouldst not have created anew by Thy Spirit of Holiness those who were to be for ever the children of wrath.

But Thy will towards us is far other; that we should

be born again into Thy heavenly kingdom, never to die any more. For this Thou hast made us once and again after Thine own image, the image of Thy holiness; for this Thou hast redeemed us; for this Thy Holy Spirit has been given to us:—that so the process of our heavenly birth might go on without ceasing, the parts of our heavenly nature being fashioned day by day by Thy hand, when as yet there were none of them; that so, when our full time is come, and the heavenly nature is ripened so as to bear to be born into its own proper world, it may be delivered from this mortal body, and receive a new and incorruptible body, and so be truly born.

If this is God's will towards us,—if for this we are,—for this we were created,—for this were put into this fair world, with so much to do in it,—what shall be said of us, if we live wholly against God's will, if in every day and every hour of our lives we are living as He would have us *not*? By what right do we thus, as it were, steal a life to which we have no title, for we were not made to please ourselves? By what right do we live, and are yet not being daily born for our eternal being? What if in another sense than St. Paul's we are not being born daily, but daily dying? What shall the end then be, but according to the beginning; and if God's Spirit is not quickening us, and forming us for the kingdom of God, is there not another spirit busy upon us, forming us after another and a hellish nature, and making us be born daily,—if we may use such contradictory language,—until we are ripened for a life which is death eternal?

RUGBY CHAPEL:

May 29, 1836.

TWO SERMONS

ON THE

INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY.

WITH NOTES AND APPENDICES.

P R E F A C E.

THE great difficulty of the subject of Scripture Prophecy may be shortly stated. We find throughout the New Testament references made to various passages in the Old Testament, which are alleged as prophetic of Christ, or of some particulars of the Christian dispensation. Now if we turn to the context of these passages, and so endeavour to discover their meaning, according to the only sound principles of interpretation, it will often appear that they do not relate to the Messiah or to Christian times, but are either the expression of religious affections generally, such as submission, hope, love, &c., or else refer to some particular circumstances in the life and condition of the writer or of the Jewish nation, and do not at all show that anything more remote, or any events of a more universal and spiritual character, were designed to be prophesied.

For instance, in the account of our Lord's temptation He is represented as allowing the application of Psalm xci. 11, 12, to Himself, as a prophecy of God's miraculous care of the Messiah. Whereas, on referring to the whole Psalm, it appears to be a devout expression of the Psalmist's sense of the happiness of those who serve and love God; a sense which is expressed very strongly after the oriental manner in descriptions at once figurative and

hyperbolical, although when divested of this colouring their meaning is perfectly discernible.

Again, the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is well known as the passage which Philip interpreted to the Ethiopian eunuch as a Christian prophecy, and which led to the eunuch's conversion. Yet, when taken along with the context, the passage, although undoubtedly difficult, seems to refer to events more closely connected with the return of the Jews from the Captivity, as that, with its accompanying blessings, appears to be the subject of the writer's prophecy.

Now first, if we take these and many other similar passages to be Christian prophecies, solely on the authority of the writers of the New Testament, it is manifest not only that we cannot urge them to those who deny that authority, but that our own use and application of the prophecies must be limited to those citations which we find already applied for us in the New Testament. For unless we understand the principle on which they are applied, we can understand no more of the Old Testament than is explained in the Christian Scriptures, and if we attempt at random to explain other passages in the same way,—that way appearing to be at variance with the ordinary rules of interpretation, and having been accepted by us in certain particular cases solely on the authority of those who have adopted it,—a door will be instantly opened to the wildest fanaticism; and no man will have any right to reproach the comments of the Jewish Rabbis with any peculiar degree of extravagance.

Or secondly, if we at once cut the knot, and say that these passages have not really the meaning which the writers of the New Testament attach to them, that they are either referred to as affording some remarkable coincidence with the circumstances of the Christian times, or when quoted as expressly speaking of those times, are so

quoted merely in compliance with a fanciful system of Scripture interpretation then prevalent amongst the Jews; we shall then, to say nothing of the pain of so judging of the writers of the New Testament, destroy a great part of our interest in the Old; we shall do away with the harmony and continuity of God's several dispensations, and deprive Christianity of a testimony which Christ Himself no less than His Apostles delighted in appealing to, as one of the most satisfactory proofs of its divine origin.

Now if, on the one hand, the applications of the Old Testament made by the writers of the New can be maintained as just and true; and, on the other hand, a principle can be discovered which explains them and warrants them, which takes them out of the range of capricious and arbitrary quotation, and enables us to read the Old Testament in the same spirit as the Apostles read it, and to apply safely and surely to Christ and Christian things passages which are not noticed in their writings;—then it will be probable that the principle so answering all the conditions required, is the true key to the difficulty, and we shall need no further evidence to convince us that it is so.

And if such a principle presents itself to us in the first place as the result of an *à priori* inquiry into the nature of Prophecy, and then when applied practically to the case before us be found to solve its difficulties; then the double proof thus afforded would seem to be as complete as we can possibly require, and we cannot doubt that, reason and experience at once concurring in the same conclusion, that conclusion may command our assent as certainly true.

The principle here alluded to has been set forth in the two Sermons now presented to the reader. I have considered it during a period of many years; and it has

continually appeared to me to be more and more true, and has enabled me to read the prophetic parts of the Old Testament with a feeling that I could really understand them. I have thought that it might prove satisfactory to other minds also; or at any rate that it might have so much of truth in it, as to suggest the whole truth to others, however it might itself fall short of it. And if it be wholly fanciful and erroneous, still it appeared incapable of weakening or disturbing the faith of any one, or of adding to the existing difficulties of the question. The publication of these Sermons therefore cannot, I would hope, do harm, even if it fails of doing good. Nay, I would even hope that it may do good, although the view contained in the Sermons should be ever so erroneous. I am quite unable to do justice to the subject of Prophecy; but I should be thankful if my errors, being at any rate harmless, shall provoke attention to the question, and excite some one to write upon it who may discharge the task more worthily. For that it does actually need to be set in a clearer light, and that the general understanding of the prophetic Scriptures is very imperfect, must, I suppose, be evident to every one.

The general principle of interpretation here maintained, that of an uniform historical or lower, and also of a spiritual or higher, sense, has been adopted by commentators in all ages of the Church. And I hope also that the more detailed points which I have tried to make out are not new, although I am not aware of having been led to them by anything but a study and comparison of the prophecies themselves. I have found with pleasure a great agreement with all the views contained in this volume, in Tholuck's first Appendix to his edition of the Epistle to the Hebrews. And in one of the volumes of the '*Theologische Studien und Kritiken*' there is a notice of a German work on the Psalms, where the application to the

Person of our Lord of the passages relating to God in the Old Testament, is explained nearly on the same grounds as in the present volume. But the explanation was not suggested to me by that notice, but had long before appeared to me to be the true solution of the apparent difficulty.

RUGBY: *October* 1839.

TWO SERMONS
ON THE
INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY.



SERMON I.

NUMBERS xxiii. 9.

*Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among
the nations.*

It is a striking thing to observe, as we turn over the records of past times, what various subjects have at different periods occupied the attention of mankind. But it is no less striking to notice what falls actually within our own experience, how many various subjects engage the attention of different persons in the same generation and the same country. How different are the objects of general interest at a university, for instance, from those most regarded in a great commercial city; how different again are the views most familiar to different classes or sects of persons within the very same town. Following this up still further, and if we come even to subjects connected with Christianity itself, what different degrees of interest are awakened by the same points in different minds. Some dwell principally on the doctrines of Christianity, others on its practical lessons; with some the success of missions is the point nearest their heart; with others it is the unity of the

Church, and the customs and opinions of Christian antiquity; while others again turn with especial fondness to the question of Prophecy, and endeavour to trace out what has actually been fulfilled, and what still, as they think, remains to be so. Now it is not an evil, but a great good, that all these subjects should be studied; neither is it to be regretted, much less to be blamed, that some of them should be peculiarly followed by some persons, and others by others. But it is to be regretted, that men should ever follow any one of these so peculiarly, as to forget the claims of the rest; for then their view and their spirit become narrow, and they understand their own favourite subject the worse, because they look at it in one light only.

Of all these divisions to which I have been alluding, the class of persons who bestow their peculiar attention on the subject of Prophecy, receive perhaps in general the least sympathy from the rest. They themselves regard their subject indeed with intense interest, but they cannot prevail on many others to study it. But there is this peculiarity in the subject of Prophecy, that where it has not been studied, men's notions respecting it are even more than commonly vague. They may have snatches of notions respecting it here and there, yet even to themselves they are conscious of their unsatisfactoriness. They talk about the evidence of Prophecy, yet I believe it is very rare indeed to meet with any one whose faith rests much upon that evidence, or indeed who has ever really tried its validity.

The subject of Prophecy, however, is one which ought, I do not say to be predominantly, far less exclusively, studied, but certainly not to be altogether neglected. If it were only for the sake of the many appeals made to it by our Lord and his Apostles, it would have a just claim on our attention. Besides, the Prophets form no inconsider-

able portion of the volume of the Scriptures, and the prophetic parts of Scripture are often, as in the first Lesson of this morning's Service, read publicly in the Service of the Church. It is well, therefore, even if we do not follow up the subject minutely, that the ideas which we have respecting it should be clear and edifying.

Now first of all, it is a very misleading notion of Prophecy, if we regard it as an anticipation of History. History, in our common sense of the term, is busy with particular nations, times, places, actions, and even persons. If in this sense Prophecy were a history written beforehand, it would alter the very condition of humanity, by removing from us our uncertainty as to the future; it would make us acquainted with those times and seasons which the Father hath put in His own power. It is anticipated History, not in our common sense of the word, but in another and far higher sense.¹ Common History, amid a vast number of particular facts and persons, can hardly trace the general principles which are to be deduced from them. Nay, the imperfection of the characters with which History deals, naturally embarrasses its general conclusions: we can trace the rise and fall of such a nation or such a city; but this is not the rise or fall of any one principle, either good or evil; but of many principles which are partly good and partly evil. Our sympathy with the prosperity and adversity of any one people must be qualified; there is an evil about them, which triumphs in their triumph; there is good about them, which suffers in their overthrow.

Now what History does not and cannot do, that Prophecy does; and for that very reason it is very different from History. Prophecy fixes our attention on principles, on good and evil, on truth and falsehood, on God and on

¹ See Note 1, at the end of the Sermons.

His enemy. Here, there is no division of feeling, no qualified sympathy; the one are deserving of our entire devotion and love, the other of our unmixed abhorrence.

Prophecy then is God's voice, speaking to us respecting the issue in all times of that great struggle which is the real interest of human life, the struggle between good and evil. Beset as we are by evil within us and without, it is the natural and earnest question of the human mind, What shall be the end at last? And the answer is given by Prophecy, that it shall be well at last; that there shall be a time when good shall perfectly triumph. But the answer declares also, that the struggle shall be long and hard; that there will be much to suffer before the victory be complete. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, but the serpent notwithstanding shall first bruise his heel.¹ So completely is the earliest prophecy² recorded in Scripture, the sum and substance so to speak of the whole language of Prophecy, how diversified soever in its particular forms.

History, we have said, is busied with particular nations, persons, and events; and from the study of these, extracts, as well as it can, some general principles. Prophecy is busy with general principles; and inasmuch as particular nations, persons, and events represent these principles up to a certain point, so far it is concerned also with them. But their mixed character, as it embarrasses and qualifies the judgment of the historian, so it must necessarily lower and qualify the promises and threatenings of the prophet. The full bliss which he delights to contemplate, because his eye is fixed chiefly upon God and perfect goodness, is not equally suited to the most imperfect goodness of God's servants. The utter extremity of suffering which belongs to God's enemy, must be mitigated for those earthly evil-

¹ See Note 2.

² See Note 3.

doers, whom God till the last great day has not yet wholly ceased to regard as His creatures.

Now then, to take examples of this both ways; Israel, the people of Israel, their kings, and their prophets, stand forth in the History and in the Prophecy of Scripture as the representatives, so to speak, of the cause of God and of goodness. But the History shows that they were very imperfect representatives of it, and therefore they can only be imperfectly the subject of the promises of Prophecy. So far as they belonged to God, the blessing is theirs; so far as they fell short of what God's servants should be, the blessing is not theirs; for they are not the real subjects of the Prophecy. For it is History, and not Prophecy, which deals with the twelve tribes of the land of Canaan, their good and evil kings, their fallings away, and final rejection of Christ their Saviour: the Israel of Prophecy is God's¹ Israel really and truly, who walk with Him faithfully, and abide with Him to the end.

Thus, as in the text, Balak king of the Moabites calls upon Balaam the prophet to curse Israel. This is the History; on the one hand there was one people, on the other there was another; Moab was not all evil, Israel was not all good. But mere History can find no difficulty in determining, that so opposed to one another in that wilderness between Egypt and Palestine, the highest good to unborn generations of the human race was involved in the preservation of Israel. It is this comparative good and evil which History can discern in the two nations, which determines their respective characters as the representatives, at that time and place, of that real good and evil whose contest is the enduring subject of Prophecy. They are their representatives, but only imperfectly; signs of ideas, which Prophecy uses, as Revelation avails itself of human language; a shadow of the reality, but not its substance.

¹ See Note 4.

Was it indeed that murmuring rebellious people, rebellious against God from the time when Moses brought them out of Egypt, of whom Prophecy declared, that God had not beheld iniquity, nor seen perverseness? Or that camp, in which every man did that which was right in his own eyes, that camp pitched amid the sands of the wilderness, beside such a narrow strip of green watered country as is all that can be found by the traveller in the desert,—did it really contain the goodly tents and tabernacles which Prophecy saw spread forth as gardens by the river side, as cedar trees beside the waters? Was it the Israel of History, whose short term of greatness in the days of David and Solomon was so soon overcast by internal division and external invasion, sinking down gradually into long centuries of subjection, humiliation, or exile, that was to rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion, not to lie down till he should eat of the prey and drink the blood of the slain; from which the Star should come and the Sceptre arise, that should smite all the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth? Prophecy spoke without reserve of the triumph of God and God's servants; if Israel belonged to God only imperfectly, her share in the triumphs of God must in that same proportion be imperfect also.

But, on the other hand, the Israel of History was, comparatively with other people, the chosen of God; and for that very reason she was appointed to the honour of representing God's true people in the language of Prophecy. As far as she represented them imperfectly, the language of Prophecy belongs not to her; but so far as she did represent them, she received their blessing; and if there was a triumph too high for her to obtain because of her imperfections, there must be also a blessing upon her for the sake of Him whose name she bears, and whose cause she is permitted to represent before the world. And

so we shall find it ; ‘The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.’ Nor have they been. For where is Moab now, or Amalek, or Ammon, or Babylon ? They are vanished out of History. Not as if the places¹ were accursed for ever : or as if the language of utter vengeance, which we find in Prophecy, was really applicable to the soil of Mesopotamia or Edom ; but the people, the race, the language, the institutions, the religion, all that constitutes national personality, if I may so speak, are passed away from the earth. And if Mesopotamia were to be civilized and fertilized to-morrow, and Babylon again rebuilt, yet it could not be the old Babylon, for that has become extinct for ever.

So with Egypt, which now is flourishing as a country : it is not the Egypt of old times ; there is a chasm not to be filled up, between the people who built the pyramids, and engraved their hieroglyphics on the obelisks, and the new nation that may occupy their land. So it is even with Greece. Christian Athens is divided, and must be, by one deep and impassable barrier, from the heathen Athens of old. But Israel exists still unchanged ; still God’s people in every land carry back their sympathies unbroken to the age of the first father of the faithful ; the patriarchs and prophets are the spiritual ancestors of the Apostles and of ourselves ; their prayers are ours, their cause was ours, for their God was ours.

And if Israel after the flesh were to return unto the Lord, what has she lost of her old identity ? Place does not make a nation, but the sameness of sympathies ; and in this respect there is nothing of Israel in the earliest times, which would be dead to Israel now. This can be said of no other nation upon earth : and thus has Israel endured, because she was, though imperfectly, the representative of the cause of that God who alone endureth for ever.

¹ See Note 5.

SERMON II.

ST. MATTHEW iv. 6.

If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down : for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee ; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

IN what I said last Sunday on the subject of Prophecy, I endeavoured to lay down what appeared to be its general object and character ; namely, to assure man amidst the existing evils of the world, that the cause of good would be finally and entirely triumphant. And this being so, as it is most certain that no people on earth has ever either perfectly served the cause of good, or utterly opposed it, so it follows, that no people can, if I may so speak, fully satisfy the mind of Prophecy ; because no people purely represents those unmixed principles of good and evil, with which Prophecy is alone properly concerned. And thus it has happened, that those who have attempted to trace an historical fulfilment of the language of Prophecy with regard to various nations, have never done their work satisfactorily ; nor on their system was it possible to do it. For the language of Prophecy on these subjects could not be literally accomplished for two reasons ; first, because, as I have said before, it was not properly applicable to any earthly nation, from the imperfection of all human things ; and, secondly, because even that character of imperfect good or evil which made certain nations the representatives,

so to speak, of the principles of good and evil themselves, was not and could not be perpetual; there are in the course of generations changes in the character of every people, both for the better and for the worse. Now where such a change took place either for good or for evil, there the prophecy could not be fulfilled at all; as in the case of Jonah's prophecy of the destruction of Nineveh; and they who under such circumstances would require the fulfilment, in order to save, as it were, the honour of the prophecy, are rebuked beforehand in the language addressed to Jonah, when he indulged a similar feeling. God's prophecies are not against Nineveh, but against sin; if Nineveh turns from her sin, she is no longer the subject of any prophecy of vengeance. Thus there may be cases where no historical fulfilment of national prophecies is to be found at all; but in all cases, the fulfilment will fall short of the full strength of the language, because, to say it once again, the language in its proper scope and force was aimed at a more unmixed good and evil than have ever been exhibited in the character of any earthly people.

And here then, arrived at this view of Prophecy, and seeing on the one hand the largeness of its promises, and on the other the necessary incompleteness of their fulfilment,—how shall the truth of God's word be reconciled with the laws of His moral government? Must He stint for our sin's sake the abundance of His mercy, or impair for His promises' sake the perfection of His justice? Surely here too, as in other respects, the creation was groaning and travailing in pain together; the children were come to the birth, but there was not strength to bring forth: hope and disappointment were struggling together; the promise was still of blessing, but the experience was of sin,—and therefore not of blessing, but of judgment.

And look around even now, and does it fare better

with the historical interpretation of Prophecy than it did in times past? Does the Christian Israel answer more worthily to the expectations of Prophecy, than the Israel after the flesh answered to them of old? Grant that Rome in later times is in some sense and in some degree the Babylon of Christian Prophecy, yet who that knows the history of the Roman Church from first to last, can pretend that its character is of such unmixed or such intense evil, as to answer to the features of the mystic Babylon of the Revelation? As truly might it be pretended that any historical Church, protestant or primitive, was a faithful image of the heavenly Jerusalem.

But where then is the consolation of Prophecy to the heart of man? What becomes of the assurance that it shall be well, infinitely well, with God's people, if no such people are to be found? Prophecy may be true in the abstract, true, it may be, for other worlds; but how to us and to this world can the magnificence of its promises of blessing be more than the exact measure of the extent of our enemy's triumph? It shows us of how great things sin has deprived us.

Thus there is a mass of prophetic language, which, according to the view we have now taken, may seem to be indefinitely waiting for its fulfilment. And so it is, and must be according to the view which we have taken, for it was not and is not in man to be the worthy subject of God's Prophecy. Not in man merely: but what shall we say, if there was one who was man truly,—man in His temptations, man in His sufferings, but who was God in His holiness, God in His strength and power! Then there is one who is the true subject of Prophecy; then there is victory for man final and complete; then the cause of good must infinitely triumph as far as this earth is concerned, or else indeed there can be no truth in Prophecy.

We see, then, how that our Lord Jesus Christ is the real subject of all Prophecy for good. We see how His resurrection and ascension into heaven are its entire fulfilment. All the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen.

For now what is the case before us? Our experience of life tells us, that it has many troubles; that good, such as we see it, has constantly its portion of affliction. This Prophecy recognised; there are pictures of suffering frequently joined to the most exalted pictures of triumph. And so it was with Christ. He bore the troubles which are the portion of man: He turned not back even from that death which seems most to prove the enemy's conquest over us. When He was taken down from the cross and laid in the sepulchre,—He in whose life there had been no sin, He who, speaking of His human nature merely, had been so truly the child of God;—when His disciples in the sorrow of their hearts said, ‘We trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel;’ we did trust so once, but behold our hope is buried in His grave;—then was there, if I may so speak, the trial moment, the agony of Prophecy: what could be any more hoped from its promises, if evil and death had triumphed even over Him, in whom there was no sin? And so, when the third morning came, and death's triumph was broken, and He rose from the dead to die no more, then was there the justification of all Prophecy; for it was well at last with the righteous, well infinitely, well eternally; all power was given to Him in heaven and in earth; all things were put under His feet; death was swallowed up in victory.

And now we see that it was not arbitrarily or capriciously that so many passages in Scripture are applied to our Lord by Himself and by His Apostles; passages which, according to the undoubted evidence of their context, were historically and literally spoken of some imperfect prophet,

or king, or priest,¹ or people, in whom they had found, and could find, no adequate fulfilment. For God had provided some better thing for us than their imperfect righteousness and imperfect blessings. Look at the 91st Psalm, from which the words of the text are taken. How largely does the Prophet speak of the security and happiness of the children of God! Our ears are familiar with its words of promise, 'There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling; thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder, the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. God shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.' Nor may we rob God's servants in every age of their share in these promises: Moses and Aaron stood unhurt amidst the plague; Paul shook off the adder from his hand, and felt no harm; chariots and horsemen of fire watched round the hill of Dothan to guard the prophet Elisha. But their full and entire fulfilment was in Him, and in Him alone, who had truly made the Most High His habitation even from the beginning; over whom all evil at all times was powerless, save so far as for our sakes He vouchsafed to bear it; who said to the sea, Peace, be still; and who, even in yielding to death, laid down His life of Himself, which none could have taken from Him, who had power to lay it down, and had power to take it again.

See also how in Him, and in Him alone, were fulfilled those remarkable promises to David, which otherwise seem incapable of fulfilment, without a violation of God's laws of righteous government. God declared to David that his house and his kingdom should be established for ever: that even though his sons should sin, yet His mercy should not finally depart from them. What then, shall God clear

¹ See Note 6.

the guilty, and shall He prolong the line of any one man for ever, though it is sure that in the course of many generations it will become unworthy to continue any more? No. God has punished the guilty; David's posterity did sin, and were cut off. It was said by the prophet Jeremiah of the last king, Coniah or Jehoiachin, 'Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.' But yet God's promise to David has stood sure: the Son of David has reigned for more than eighteen hundred years, owned over all the earth as King and Lord; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

Christ is thus the true and complete fulfilment of Prophecy: no promise of exaltation to the good is expressed in higher language than has been, and is, and will continue for ever to be, in Him accomplished. We can turn as our fathers have done, to Christ's resurrection, and say, There is our warrant for the truth of Prophecy; good has triumphed over evil.

But still we see not yet all things put under Christ; the last enemy is not yet destroyed; the state of Israel now, no less than of Israel of old, is no state of perfect peace, and love, and joy. It is not that we need be concerned for the honour of Prophecy; we see clearly enough, conscience tells us too plainly, why its promises are not fulfilled amongst us to the letter; the promises were for the righteous, and we are not righteous. But for ourselves there is great need of our being concerned, lest Christ's triumph extend not to us, and lest we, like the Israel of old, should in the last great day be found not to be amongst His people. He wills that those whom God has given Him shall be with Him where He is; that He and His redeemed shall for all eternity fulfil the promises of Prophecy, and prove that there is indeed a glory for the

righteous. We need not fear for the truth of this : God is able of the stones to raise up children unto Abraham : there will be guests enough found to sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb. Twice has God willed to mark out these guests here ; that all who belonged to His Church on earth, all who were circumcised, all who were baptized, should be the heirs of the promises of Prophecy. But twice has man's sin rendered this impossible : the seal of Baptism has proved no surer a mark than the seal of Circumcision ; again have the people whom He brought out of Egypt corrupted themselves. Still there is, and ever has been, a remnant ; still there are those whom Christ owns now, and will own for ever. Theirs are the promises in all their fulness ; not that their own righteousness is proportioned to such blessings, but because they are Christ's, and Christ in God's. In us there is still as in times past the same incapability of answering to the language of Prophecy ; but the kingdom which Christ has gained, is for His sake given to His true people. It is given to those whom at the last great day, when He shall judge to whom all hearts are open, He shall acknowledge to be His.

So then the promises and the consolations of Prophecy may all be ours. Christ's triumph is not for Himself alone ; we may all partake in it ; to us all may, through Him, be given the full extent of blessing which the 91st Psalm and other similar passages contain. Those passages may be a dead letter to us ; but they may also be life and reality. If, looking on the world as God looks on it, we feel keenly the struggle which is going on between good and evil, and fain would take our part in it to the death under Christ's banner ; then, along with all the anxieties and the sufferings of the contest, we have our portion besides in the hopes of the final issue. Then, as we become more deeply interested in it, the language of Pro-

phesy becomes more welcome ; the pledge of its truth, the fact of Christ's resurrection, becomes more unspeakably precious. With such anxieties, such efforts, and such hopes, we have the Christian's sure seal ; not that outward seal of baptism, which is too often broken, but the seal of God's Spirit, that as Christ was, so are we in this world. Blessed are they, in whom the hopes and fears, which are the common portion of us all, are directed to those objects which Christ's true people hope for and fear ; to whom Prophecy is no empty language about matters of other days or other persons, but the answer given by God to the earnest questionings of their nature, 'Has God cast me off for ever, or shall it be a blessing to me to have been born ?'

NOTES.

NOTES.



NOTE 1, PAGE 335.

‘It is anticipated History, not in our common sense of the word, but in another and far higher sense.’

This, according to a very common interpretation, is the sense of the famous words in St. Peter’s second Epistle: *πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται*. History is especially *ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως*: that is to say, what the historian relates of Babylon, is to be understood of Babylon only; of the city so called on the banks of the Euphrates, and not of any other place more or less morally resembling it. But what Prophecy says of Babylon is *κοινῆς ἐπιλύσεως*: it does not relate exclusively, nor even principally, to the Babylon of History; but to certain spiritual evils of which Babylon was at one period the representative, and Rome at another, and of which other cities which may have succeeded to the greatness of Babylon and Rome, may be the representatives now. And thus the Babylon of History is only for a limited time, and in an imperfect degree, the Babylon of Prophecy. It is so for a limited time only,—because the historical Babylon has long since perished, but the prophecies in the Old Testament against it have been repeated in the New, almost in the very same words; so that the prophetic Babylon must have been in existence long after the historical Babylon had been destroyed. And only in an imperfect degree,—because the language used respecting it is the exact opposite to that used with respect to Jerusalem; and as the historical Jerusalem never came up to the pictures of the

holiness and happiness of the prophetical Jerusalem, so neither have we any reason to believe that there was any such peculiar and unmixed wickedness in the historical Babylon, as to make it the proper and ultimate subject of the denunciations uttered against the Babylon of Prophecy. Not the proper and ultimate subject, but the subject of them partially and in the first instance; as Rome was partially also in the second instance; and as other places may be, and I believe are, in the third instance: so that the prophecies, as I believe, will go on continually meeting with a typical and imperfect fulfilment, till the time of the end; when they will be fulfilled finally and completely in the destruction of the true prophetical Babylon, the World as opposed to the Church.

In the case of Babylon, it is easy to perceive what is the prophetical idea, if I may so speak, of which the historical Babylon is made the representative. Whether this could be discovered with regard to all the cities or nations which are the subjects of Prophecy, I will not venture to pronounce an opinion. In some instances it seems to be discernible; as, for example, the curse upon Amalek, Deuteronomy xxv. 17-19, appears to be illustrated by the woe denounced by our Lord upon those who shall 'offend one of the little ones who believe in him.' St. Matthew xviii. 6. Amalek smiting the hindmost and the feeble of the host of Israel, when they had been just redeemed out of Egypt and were faint and weary, belongs surely to the general idea of hindering weak Christians on their way towards heaven, instead of assisting and encouraging them. And the same sin appears to constitute in great measure the idea of the prophetical Edom. Ezekiel xxxv. Psalm cxxxvii. 7.

I wish it to be remembered, that I am by no means denying the literal and historical sense of the prophecies relating to different cities or nations, but only contending that the historical sense is not the highest sense; and that generally the language of the Prophecy will be found to be hyperbolical as far as regards its historical subjects, and only corresponding with the truth exactly, if we substitute for the historical subject the idea of which it is the representative. Babylon, in the prophecies of the Old Testament, means undoubtedly the

city so called in Mesopotamia ; Amalek means the historical Amalek ; Edom or Mount Seir signifies the historical people of Edom. And as it was a great blessing to belong to the Israel of History, because she was chosen to represent the idea of God's true people ; so it was a great calamity to belong to the historical Babylon, or Amalek, or Edom, because they had certain points in them which made them be chosen to represent under its various forms the idea of God's enemies. But in neither case was the representative or symbol of the idea, the full and adequate expression of the idea itself.

NOTE 2, PAGE 336.

'The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, but the serpent, notwithstanding, shall first bruise his heel.'

See, Sermon on The Fall ; from page 13 'In their first and literal sense these words are true and perfectly intelligible,' &c. &c., to the end.

NOTE 3, PAGE 336.

'So completely is the earliest Prophecy recorded in Scripture the sum and substance, so to speak, of the whole language of Prophecy.'

'The Spirit of Christ in the prophets,' says St. Peter, 'testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.' And so our Lord reproves the two disciples who were going to Emmaus, 'for being slow of heart to believe the prophets ;' and he then asks, 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ?' That is, 'Was it not to be expected from the language of the prophets that Christ should first suffer, before he was finally victorious ?' And the Evangelist then adds, 'And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.' Some verses afterwards the language is yet stronger, as being more particular ; 'All things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in

the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me.' These words forbid us to look for the prophecies relating to our Lord in some detached passages only of the Old Testament ; they imply that they run through the old volume, and are to be found in each of its divisions, the Law or Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Psalms. Now it seems to me that from examining the above words of our Lord and His Apostles carefully, we shall be led to conclude, that the prophetic witness of the Old Testament to Christ here spoken of, consists in the frequent recurrence of the same idea, namely, that of the union of suffering and glory in the persons of God's true servants ; an idea, be it observed, which expresses the two great points in the history of man, his Fall and his Redemption. Because he had fallen, there was to be suffering ; because he was redeemed from his fall, there was to be final glory.

Now as this union of suffering and glory constitutes, so to speak, the idea of man,—for the Lamb having been slain from the foundation of the world, the redemption may be said to have been cotemporary with the Fall ; and man, therefore, has never been a fallen creature simply, but at once a fallen and a redeemed creature ;—so it was to be represented perfectly in the person of Christ, who Himself bore the whole human race in Himself in His relations with God. In Him who was the perfect image of man, that is, of a being fallen and redeemed, there was to be therefore the extreme of suffering and the extreme of glory ; but as He was the perfect image of God also—that is, of One all perfect, and the Author of all redemption—therefore the suffering which He endured as belonging to man's nature, became the cause and instrument whereby the glory belonging to God's nature was bestowed also upon, and had been from the beginning foreordained for, man ; that God having borne man's sufferings, man might be rendered capable of partaking God's glory.

But although redeemed in the divine counsels even from the period of the Fall, and even permitted in some imperfect measure to look forward to that redemption, yet so long as the redemption was not yet revealed, man retained more of the character of a fallen than of a redeemed creature, and therefore

the suffering of his condition would much overbalance the glory. Thus although sparks and even flashes of the promised glory, if I may so speak, were seen from time to time to burst forth in the world, yet the evil was greatly predominant; and he who should faithfully represent the state of man as it had been ever since the Fall, must therefore be a man of sorrows.

In this respect then all history, profane no less than sacred, contained in some sort a prophecy of Christ, inasmuch as it represented man in a state of suffering. But it was a much more near prophecy, or, if we like to call it by another name, a much closer prophetic resemblance, when not merely men in general, but those who bore in a manner God's mark upon them, when God's own people and God's own prophets were also sufferers; some of whom, by the offices which they held with respect to other men, shadowed forth also, though in an infinitely imperfect measure, the act of redemption and the character of a redeemer.

In such persons was exhibited the nearest possible approach of mere humanity to the likeness of Him who united humanity with the Godhead; while at the same time they expressed most perfectly the actual evil of man's condition, and the need of a redemption. As men, they were full of infirmities and sorrows, but as being in some measure brought near to God, and invested with a semblance of the character of Mediator and Redeemer, they had also their portion of the blessings of redemption; and their language was, even amidst all the acknowledged evil of their condition, the language of faith and hope, sometimes even of assured victory.

Setting aside, then, the records of profane History, or of those persons in sacred History who have no nearer resemblance to Christ than as being partakers of man's nature; let us see what is the picture contained in the Scripture, of those who were more properly types of Christ; and whether the story of their lives, and the expression of their language when it has been preserved to us, does not present that union of suffering even with the liveliest hope, or the greatest actual prosperity, which shows that he who took upon himself man's nature, must endure as well as conquer. Historical instances of this are Abel, the

Patriarchs, Moses, David, Elijah, and the whole people of Israel, who although they were chosen by God to be His own inheritance, yet endured the long evils of the house of bondage before they could enter into the promised land. In all of these was abundantly exhibited the prophesied condition of humanity that the serpent should bruise the heel of the seed of the woman.

But instances perhaps still more striking are afforded by the language of God's people, expressing their own sense of their own condition. It is in this way that the Book of Job, the Books of the Prophets—as often as they express the personal feelings of the writers—and above all the Book of Psalms, contain such a lively image of the life of Christ. Most remarkable is it to see in the Prophets and in the Psalms the confident anticipation of future triumph, which in the human writers individually was never verified. But by this very circumstance their incomplete and typical character is fully manifested; it is by this especially that they in a manner point to Christ: that they stretch out their arms to Him, imploring him to fulfil what they could but faintly shadow,—the whole condition of fallen and redeemed man: sufferings first, but afterwards glory; the serpent bruising man's heel; but man finally crushing the serpent's head. It is thus that the language of many of the Psalms, necessarily hyperbolic when used by their human writers, finds its perfect application in Him alone, who was the true image of humanity in both its appointed conditions; in its sufferings first, and afterwards in its glory.

NOTE 4, PAGE 337.

‘The Israel of Prophecy is God's Israel, really and truly, who walk with Him faithfully, and abide with Him to the end.’

Whatever scheme of interpretation we adopt for Prophecy, it is at any rate necessary that it should proceed upon some fixed principle, and not be varied according to the supposed meanings of particular passages. It is consistent to follow throughout and exclusively an historical interpretation; it is consistent also to follow exclusively a spiritual interpretation;

or again, it is consistent to adopt always the two together ; and to say that every prophecy has its historical sense, and also its spiritual sense. But it is not consistent to interpret the same prophecy partly historically and partly spiritually : to say that in one verse David is spoken of, and in another Christ : that Jerusalem here means the literal city in Palestine, and there signifies heaven : that Israel in one place signifies the historical people of the Israelites, and in another place the people of God, whether Jews or Gentiles. This is absolutely foolish, and is manifestly a mere accommodation of the prophetical Scriptures to certain previously conceived notions of our own.

The interpretation of the prophecies which speak of the restoration of Israel, depends on the general interpretation of all the prophetic language of which Israel is the subject. But it seems to me impossible to deny, that the Israel of Prophecy is sometimes the historical Israel, and also that it is sometimes the spiritual Israel. Now if we interpret it in the former sense exclusively, in those places where it is certain that the literal Israel must be intended, and in the latter sense exclusively, where it is certain that the spiritual Israel must be intended,—we have no sure guide for that great mass of passages, which may apply either to the literal or spiritual Israel, but which do not certainly signify either one of them. And thus the controversy as to the historical or spiritual sense of these passages must remain, so far as I can see, interminable.

But considering again, that the general form and character of the prophecies which are certainly literal, and of those which are certainly spiritual, is altogether the same, we are led to ask, whether in fact one and the same rule of interpretation does not apply to all of them ; and whether, as we are sure that some must be understood literally, and others spiritually, we may not conclude that all may and ought to be understood both literally and spiritually.

We open then the books of the Prophets, and we find them full of exhortations, instructions, threatenings, and promises, addressed to the people of Israel. Let us consider all these as addressed in the first instance to the historical Israel, and we shall find the exhortations and instructions which relate to

things present and actual suiting exactly to its condition ; because they partake of the character of history, and history, as we have seen, treats only of actual persons, and particular events. But when we come to the language of threatening and of promise, we shall find that even where we can trace an historical fulfilment, as in the prophecies that speak of the restoration of Israel from the Babylonian captivity, that fulfilment is yet only imperfect ; it is *a* fulfilment of Prophecy, but not *the* fulfilment : there is nothing of that exact agreement with any historical reality, which had existed so strikingly in the historical parts of the same prophecy. Nor is this wonderful ; for the true subject of pure Prophecy, as distinct from History, is not any human person or persons, fact or facts, but ideas and principles which in no merely human persons or actions have ever been embodied perfectly.

Thus, as the historical part of Prophecy found its exact application in the historical Israel, so the purely prophetical part finds its exact application in the spiritual Israel ; because the spiritual Israel is a pure idea, such as is the subject of pure Prophecy. It finds its exact application, because it finds a real, full, and adequate accomplishment, although it may not be an accomplishment according to the letter of the prophecy. We must carefully distinguish between a different and an inadequate accomplishment ; for the first may very well be a substantial fulfilment of a prophecy, which the other cannot be. If it be prophesied that Israel shall offer his burnt-offering without interruption, and acceptably,—it is a full and adequate accomplishment of this if Israel offers his prayers freely and acceptably ; supposing that, under an altered state of things, prayers shall have become what sacrifice was in the time of the prophets. But if it be prophesied that Israel shall tread on the necks of his enemies, and Israel's condition is only so far improved that he is restored to his own land, and to the enjoyment of a nominal independence, but remains still in a state of real subjection ; then although this may be a partial fulfilment, or a first dawning and pledge of the fulfilment, yet if there be nothing more than this, the prophecy receives no adequate accomplishment.

Again, if in the course of years the historical Israel becomes

manifestly in a different relation to God and to the world from that in which it existed formerly; if, for instance, it is no longer God's people exclusively, but other nations are incorporated with it, and are made sharers in all its privileges,—then it is quite clear that the language addressed to the historical Israel in its old state cannot by possibility be applicable to it in its changed state. For in its old state it stood in decided opposition to all other nations; it alone was the people of God, and all other nations were strangers. In its old state a prophecy is delivered, that Israel shall have dominion over Tyre, or Egypt, or Chittim. But in its altered state, Tyre and Egypt and Chittim are become themselves a part of Israel; and how can Israel have dominion over itself? The very necessity of the case demands a different fulfilment; for the historical Israel being no longer what it was formerly, and other nations having changed their condition also, what was spoken of them in their old relations cannot literally be fulfilled of them in their new, without involving a contradiction to its own principle.

Now let us consider the prophecies in the thirtieth chapter of Deuteronomy, which promise to the Israelites a restoration to their own land after they had been led into captivity, and the enjoyment of all manner of happiness in Canaan, if they should repent and walk faithfully in God's commandments. Take these promises in their historical sense as addressed to the historical Israel. They are as yet, it is said, unfulfilled, but they will be fulfilled hereafter. But it seems to me that they have been fulfilled already, so far as it was possible that they could be fulfilled to the historical Israel; but because such a fulfilment was, and must have been, imperfect, God has provided another Israel, in and for whom they can and will be fulfilled perfectly. For what is the promise? Is it not substantially the promise of the Law, 'that he who doeth these things shall live by them'? If Israel in his captivity turns faithfully to God, Israel shall return to his land, and shall enjoy the blessing. Now if Israel obtained righteousness and life by the Law, so also might he have obtained the restoration and the blessing spoken of in this prophecy. But he never obtained or could claim either, for he never performed the required

conditions. He did in some imperfect measure turn to God in the Babylonian captivity ; and to show that the non-fulfilment of Prophecy is never to be imputed to a want of power or faithfulness in God, the promise was in a like imperfect measure fulfilled, and Israel was restored, though in a very poor and humbled condition, to his own land. But then another Israel was provided by God, which might, through the redemption and the power vouchsafed to it, perform the conditions, and so enjoy the promise. The idea of the Israel of Prophecy was represented in a purer form than before, in the Christian Church.

But the Church which was now the representative of the true Israel, proved to be, like the nation which had been its representative before, an imperfect and unworthy image of it ; again, the historical and the spiritual Israel differed from each other. Yet as there are now, and ever have been, in the Christian Israel, those who have fulfilled in and through Christ the conditions required of them, so there are and ever have been some who should obtain the promises. God has promised His true Israel that he shall return to his own land, and shall fall away no more, and shall be crowned with abundance of blessing. And as surely as Christ has died and risen again, so surely shall God's true Israel return in multitudes, which no man can number, to their own city and their own country, to their own heavenly Jerusalem ; and there shall they be safe from sin and temptation, and enjoy the fulness of joy for ever. And then can we say that God's promises are not kept, and that the voice of Prophecy has spoken in vain, unless the remnant of the historical Israel be brought back from countries little inferior at any rate to Canaan, and be settled once more in Palestine.

It seems impossible to maintain, that the restoration of the historical Israel to the land of Canaan is the complete and real fulfilment of such prophecies, unless we are prepared to say, that the horizon of man's hope has never been enlarged beyond the limits of earthly blessing. Canaan was the highest promise to the historical Israel ; is it the highest likewise to the Israel of God ? And in like manner as God's people were once confined

to a single one of the nations of the earth, now they belong to a great multitude of nations, and their border stretches from one extremity of the globe to the other. Surely this acknowledged extension of Israel requires a corresponding extension of Canaan. If Israel were indeed to attempt to dwell between Jordan and the sea, between Lebanon and the river of Egypt, well might he exclaim in the words of the prophet, 'The place is too strait for me; give place to me, that I may dwell.'

But although the full and real completion of the prophecies relating to Israel belongs neither to the first historical Israel, nor yet to the second,—the visible Church of Christ—but to those only who shall be found to have been true Israelites, children of God in the Spirit, whether they belonged to the Jewish or to the Christian Israel according to the flesh;—yet if any one urges, that over and above this real and adequate fulfilment, there may be also a lower fulfilment again vouchsafed even to the old historical Israel, whenever he shall turn to the Lord, then I will not attempt to deny this position, provided it be allowed that such a fulfilment is by no means necessary to the truth of prophecy; that it is given *ex abundantia*; and that as in no one case we have a right to expect it, so if it be withheld, we ought neither to feel surprise or perplexity. Instances of such a fulfilment of prophecy are certainly to be met with in Scripture. When our Lord said of His own Disciples in His last solemn prayer, 'Those whom thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, save the son of perdition:' we cannot doubt but that the highest and adequate fulfilment of these words is to be found in the love which Christ showed to the souls of His Apostles, that they had been kept by Him from their worst enemy. Yet St. John recognises a fulfilment of them also in the care which Christ took of their bodily safety, when He said to the soldiers who came to take Him, 'If ye seek me, let these go their way.' So again the words in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which in their highest sense must relate to Christ's Atonement, St. Matthew regards as having been fulfilled in a lower sense by Christ's miraculous cures:—'He healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, saying, Himself took our infirmi-

ties and bare our sicknesses.' And a third example of the same kind may be found in the literal fulfilment of the words of the twenty-second Psalm, 'They parted my garments among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots.' No one could reasonably have thought that Christ's death and resurrection were not the real and sufficient fulfilment of this Psalm, even if His hands and feet had never been literally pierced, and the soldiers had never literally divided His garments among them, or cast lots for His coat. But because there were persons who would be more struck by such a minute fulfilment than by that general fulfilment which to us seems so far more satisfactory, therefore God was pleased that they also should have the satisfaction which they desired; and over and above the great and substantial fulfilment of the prophecy, He provided also those instances of minute agreement, which however thankful we may be to trace now that they have been given, we could not, I think, have ventured to expect beforehand.

With these examples before us, I would not dare to say that God may not be pleased to vouchsafe some great and special blessings to the remnant of the historical Israel, when they shall again be grafted into the Israel of God. But even if none such are granted to them, the prophecies relating to the future and final blessing of Israel seem to my mind to have their abundant¹ fulfilment in the rest reserved for the people of God. If

¹ It may be asked, what spiritual fulfilment can possibly be given to the latter chapters of Ezekiel's prophecy, which speak in such detail of the plan of the new Temple, of the rules to be observed by the Priests, and of the portions of land to be enjoyed by the several tribes; particulars, all of which, it may be said, can be only understood of the literal and historical Israel. A partial answer to this question may be given, by referring to the description of the heavenly Jerusalem in the book of the Revelation. There, it is quite certain that the prophet is not speaking of any historical Israel, or of any literal temple; and yet we find much minuteness of detail, even to an enumeration of the several precious stones which form the foundations of the wall of the city. But if it be urged that the length of Ezekiel's vision forbids us to look upon all its descriptions as mere fanciful embellishment, and that the question still remains, for what end we can conceive those chapters to have been written, if they are merely a figurative expression of the simple truth that God's people shall have a land, and a temple,

God's people shall live in His presence for ever in perfect safety and crowned with glory, I cannot conceive what more can be wanting to the adequate fulfilment of the most magnificent language of prophecy relative to the future triumphs of Israel.

NOTE 5, PAGE 339.

‘Not as if the places were accursed for ever,’ &c.

If any man discerns an agreement between certain existing facts and the literal language of prophecy, it may seem ungracious to tell him that this agreement is not the real fulfilment of prophecy: and we may be asked at any rate, why we should disturb a belief, in which error, even if it be error, may be more welcome and more edifying than truth. I suppose, however, that no thinking man who believes in God will seriously maintain that error can be more edifying than truth; for it is one of the blessings of faith in God, that no truth which He permits us to discover can greatly perplex us; for if it be a truth existing in His world, we may be sure that it is not there but by His permission; and if it be a truth wholly evil,—as for instance that sin exists,—yet He can, and has provided a remedy for it; so that if we cleave to Him we need not be afraid of it. But I quite allow, that if one opinion be clearly edifying and not clearly erroneous, while another is certainly mischievous but not certainly true, then there should be a respect entertained for the

and a Priest, which shall never pass away; the only answer to be given seems to be a simple confession of our ignorance. We cannot tell now, but perhaps we may know hereafter, what the real meaning and object of Ezekiel's vision are. But the example of the Revelation, and the actual impossibility of understanding some parts of the vision literally, as they speak of such parts of the Jewish worship as have been most surely done away in Christ, may justify us in not allowing our ignorance to disturb our knowledge; in not giving up a system of interpretation which explains the prophecies of Scripture generally, because there is one prophecy to which we cannot see how to apply it; although that same prophecy repels no less any other system of interpretation, and cannot indeed be understood on the scheme of a mere literal fulfilment, any more than the others which on the scheme of a spiritual fulfilment are intelligible.

former, and we should not advance the latter except on the most urgent necessity. The conditions, however, of this second case are not easily to be met with : there is something of a contradiction in believing a tenet to be certainly beneficial, and yet possibly false ; to be certainly mischievous, and yet possibly true. The question after all is one of probabilities ; to one man's mind the apparent usefulness of an opinion so commends it, that he does not like to suspect its falsehood : while another is so impressed with a belief of its falsehood, that he cannot consent to believe that it is really useful. And the only rule to be given is, that the former should have sufficient faith, to allow his opinion to be questioned without fear, whilst the latter should have sufficient reverence for seeming goodness, to withhold him from attacking it lightly or wantonly.

But on the present occasion, if it be edifying to believe that God's prophecies have their sure and adequate fulfilment, that is a belief which, so far from shaking, I would earnestly labour to encourage and confirm. Nay, farther, if it be edifying to believe that they have in some instances their minute and literal, as well as their large and substantial fulfilment, this too I do not deny, but fully allow ; only it seems to me to be dangerous to rest too much upon these as on the great fulfilment of Prophecy, lest we should be shocked and our faith be troubled, if in any case they are not to be found. With this preface I shall venture now to make a few remarks on some of the supposed literal fulfilments of Scripture prophecies, in the case of Babylon, Edom, and Egypt.

It will not I suppose be denied, that, speaking now of the historical sense of a national prophecy, the subject of the prophet's blessings or curses is what I may be allowed to call the personality of the nation ; that is, the people as exhibiting a certain character ; which character they have derived in part at least from their institutions, their race, and their prevailing tone of moral opinion. When for instance a prophet at a given period denounces woe against Babylon, the object of his denunciation is the Babylonian people as it then exists, and its institutions, race, and prevailing opinions, so far as they tend to make the people what it is. And the woe denounced against

Babylon must be considered, I think, to be substantially fulfilled, if the Babylonian people then existing, and the things which helped to give it its peculiar character, be put down and gradually extinguished.

Now this it seems to me has been actually accomplished. Babylon as a sovereign empire was put down for ever by the Persian conquest. Its influence as an active element in determining the fate of other nations was stopped at once. Moral and intellectual results in Asia have been effected only through the action of physical power; 'Græcia capta ferum victorem cepit,' is one of the peculiarities of the history of Europe. Babylonian science, or art, or religion, whatever they may have been, became powerless over the world when the sceptre of Babylonian dominion was broken. The genius of Babylon received a deadly wound; he drooped for a while, and died.

The capture of Babylon by Cyrus took place in the year 538 before the Christian æra. But a hundred years afterwards, when Herodotus visited Babylonia, the city was still populous, and the surrounding country was the richest in the Persian empire. Nearly forty years later, when Xenophon followed the younger Cyrus in his expedition against his brother Artaxerxes, Babylon was still a great city, and the canals which communicated¹ between the Euphrates and Tigris were in good repair, and navigated by corn barges. Seventy-five years afterwards the same state of things still existed. When Alexander entered Babylon after the battle of Arbela, he found the temples indeed in ruins,² but the Chaldean priests still inhabited the city as formerly, and it was still a great and wealthy capital. Alexander, as is well known, ordered the temples to be restored, and planned the construction of a great harbour or wet dock in the Euphrates, with the intention of making Babylon the centre of commerce between the West and the Indian Ocean. His early death prevented the accomplishment of his purpose; and afterwards the foundation of Seleucia³ on the Tigris, which was the capital first of the Greek Syrian kings, and afterwards of those of Parthia, drew away the population from Babylon, and

¹ Xenophon, *Anabasis*, i. 7, sect. 15.

² Arrian, iii. 16, vii. 16, *et seq.*

³ Strabo, xvi. p. 738.

caused it gradually to fall into decay. In the Augustan age, more than five hundred years after its conquest by Cyrus, it was ¹ still partially inhabited; but a hundred and fifty years later, in the time of the Antonines, Pausanias says ² that nothing was remaining of it except the walls and the temple of Belus. This, however, appears to have been an exaggeration, or else it must have been peopled again at a subsequent period; for in the fourth century of the Christian æra, Ammianus Marcellinus, writing from his own personal knowledge of Mesopotamia and Assyria, classes ³ Babylon, Ctesiphon, and Seleucia, together, as the three greatest and most famous cities of all that neighbourhood: he also speaks of the fertility of Assyria in the highest terms; describes the Euphrates ⁴ as divided into three branches, all of which were navigable, and as watering a highly cultivated country; and mentions in particular one branch that watered the heart of Babylonia, ⁵ ‘tractus Babylonios interiores,’ ‘benefiting the lands and the surrounding cities.’ Thus, during a period of more than eight hundred years from its conquest by Cyrus, Babylon existed as an inhabited city, and the country around it continued to be fertile and populous.

Now shall we say that during all this time the historical sense of the prophecies concerning Babylon was not fulfilled, but that they waited for a still later period, and were only completely accomplished when Babylon fell into a state of utter ruin, and the country around it became a desert? But then we must say, that so long as there remained any vestiges of the old historical Babylonians, their land was not cursed; but when they had vanished altogether, and other races, and languages, and manners, and religions, had come into their place, then the land was visited with desolation. Surely we may rather say, that the historical sense of the prophecy was substantially fulfilled when the empire of Babylon fell, when its temples were spoiled and overthrown, and its people lost their national existence, and became the mere subjects of the Great King. And

¹ Diodorus, ii. 9, *Βραχὺ τι μέρος οἰκεῖται.*

² viii. 33.

³ Splendidissimæ et pervulgatæ hæ solæ sunt tres. Ammianus, xxiii. p. 251, ed. Vales.

⁴ Ammianus, xxxii. pp. 250, 252.

⁵ Id. xxiv. p. 266.

the hand of God, as it had wrought this work, so it would not suffer it to be undone. Had Alexander accomplished his purposes, and made Babylon the seat of his empire, it is likely that the national personality of Babylon, if I may so speak, would have revived under a Greek sovereign; and that Alexander's successors might have become Babylonians, as the Ptolemies did in fact become Egyptians. But this was not to be: Alexander died in the vigour of life; his attempt to revive the imperial state of Babylon was as fruitless as that of Julian to revive the temple-worship of Jerusalem; and his successors the Seleucidæ, instead of restoring the Babylonian empire, contributed even to the fall of the mere city, by founding a new capital at Seleucia.

Again, the historical Babylon of Prophecy having been put down when the national personality of Babylon had perished,—it seems contrary to the general course of God's dealings that the curse should attach itself to the mere soil of the country when possessed by a new people, and yet should not have been felt so long as the people for whose sake it is supposed to have been cursed, remained in existence. But this is not mere matter of speculation. Babylon was at one time the seat of a Christian Church. *Ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς ἡ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι συνεκλεκτή*, says St. Peter at the close of his first Epistle. It is wholly unwarranted to fancy that in such a passage, where the language is of the simplest kind, the term Babylon is used allegorically. We know that Babylon was at that time an inhabited city, and there seems no reasonable doubt that St. Peter's Epistle was written in it. But if Babylon were the seat of a Christian Church, God Himself was there; and no place is or can be accursed where God dwells. It seems to me almost shocking to conceive a Christian Church existing in a spot the very soil of which was accursed. The sin of the old Babylon could not be so much more powerful than the grace of Christ's presence.

As therefore the prophecies respecting the historical Babylon were really and substantially fulfilled when the Babylonian people ceased to be sovereign and became subject, and thus exercised no farther influence on the course of events, or the character of nations; as the desolation of the city, and still more

of the surrounding country, did not take place for many centuries, and was at its height after the actual extinction of that Babylonian people against which the judgment was denounced ; as, thirdly, Babylon has been the seat of a Christian Church, and thus could no longer have been accursed ; and as, if we regard the present desolation of the country round Babylon to have been necessary to the fulfilment of the prophecies respecting it, we must also require a similar literal fulfilment in all other cases, which it is impossible to find ;—it seems to me wiser and safer to say, that the real and complete fulfilment of the prophecies respecting Babylon is to be found in the complete destruction of the Babylonian power and nationality ; and that those prophecies would have been accomplished as truly, if the city had continued to be inhabited, and the country had been still fruitful and populous, as it was for nearly eight hundred years after the overthrow of the Empire : that therefore if any look upon the present state of the city and country to be a fulfilment of the prophecies, they should regard it as a fulfilment *ex abundanti* ; as one of those instances, not to be drawn into a general rule, in which God has been pleased to grant an agreement of a minute and literal kind between the prediction and the event,—as if for the satisfaction of those who could not appreciate agreement in more general and essential points : but that they must by no means consider the truth of Prophecy as involved in the continuance of such a minute fulfilment, nor conceive that if Mesopotamia were again to become fertile and habitable, and a new town were to be built on the site of Babylon, it would be a revival of that Babylon against which God's judgments were denounced.

But if it be asked, Why then was the language of Prophecy so strong, if it was not meant to be literally fulfilled ? I answer, that the real subject of the prophecy in its highest sense is not the historical but the spiritual Babylon ; and that no expressions of ruin and destruction can be too strong when applied to the world which is to be dissolved, and utterly to perish. And it will be found, I think, a general rule in all the prophecies of the Scripture, that they contain expressions which will only be adequately fulfilled in their last and spiritual fulfil-

ment ; and that as applied to the lower fulfilments which precede this, they are and must be hyperbolical.

I now proceed to notice the prophecies which relate to Edom. These are to be found chiefly in Jeremiah xlix. 7–22; Ezekiel xxxv. ; and in the Prophecy of Obadiah ; and their substance is, that because Edom had oppressed and insulted Israel in the day of his calamity, it should be visited with heavy judgments, and laid waste, and be left desolate. The historical fulfilment of this seems to be, that Edom as a nation soon became extinct ; that the Edomites who dwelt near the southern frontier of Judæa were conquered by Hyrcanus¹ and were obliged to adopt the rites and customs of the Jews, while the larger portion of the people who lived to the south and east of the Dead Sea were confounded with the Arabian tribes, and were known by the name of Nabatæans. Petra, which was afterwards so famous, is called a Nabatæan city by Pliny² and by Strabo ; and Strabo describes even the Idumæans on the south of Judæa as having been originally Nabatæans ; but owing to quarrels amongst themselves, they left their old country, he says, and came over to the Jews, and adopted their customs.

Beyond this it does not seem possible to trace the exact fate of the Edomites ; and Jerome, after briefly noticing the historical sense of the prophecy in general terms, dwells on it in detail only in the higher or spiritual sense. Indeed the prophetic idea of Edom, the sin of those who offend one of Christ's little ones, fully explains the severity of the language employed in the prophecies respecting it ; but as far as relates to the historical Edom, the language here too is hyperbolical, nor can its fulfilment be insisted on farther than this,—that while Israel continued to exist as a nation, Edom, like Amalek and Ammon and the other neighbouring people, gradually has perished out of history. But since the recent discovery of the ruins of Petra, it has been contended that the desolate state of that country is a confirmation of the prophecies concerning Edom, that it should be laid waste for

¹ Josephus, *Antiq.* xiii. 9, § 1.

² Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* vi. sect. 32, ed. Sillig. Strabo, xvi. pp. 760 and 780.

ever. To this I think the objections are two-fold ; first, that it does not appear that Petra was ever regarded in the days of its greatness as an Edomite city, but as belonging to Arabia, and to the Arabian tribe of the Nabatæans ; and, secondly, that the splendour of Petra, as appears by the existing remains, belonged to a period long subsequent to the prophecies against Edom ; and it cannot surely be considered as an exact fulfilment of the severest denunciations of vengeance, that after those denunciations, the country which was the object of them should rise to a degree of wealth and splendour far greater than it had ever known before, that this prosperous condition should last for several centuries, and then should only yield to that common fate which had consigned so many cities of the East to utter desolation, after the dominion and the commerce to which they owed their greatness have been transferred elsewhere. The ruin of Petra has not been more complete than that of Palmyra.

The prophecies relating to Egypt are remarkable for their tempered severity ; agreeing in this respect with the language of other parts of Scripture, which exhibits in speaking of Egypt a striking mixture of condemnation and of favour. We could understand this better, if we could make out what is the prophetic idea of Egypt. Israel was not to hate an Egyptian, because he had been a stranger in his land ; although historically his sojourn in Egypt did not seem fitted to make him look back on it with any feelings of tenderness. Can it be that as Babylon is the idea of the world in a bad sense,—the world at enmity with God, and opposed to His Church,—so Egypt is the world in a milder sense, as needing God's grace, but not as resisting or opposing it ;—the natural world, out of which the Church was taken, but which with all its imperfections and corruption retains a sense of right and wrong, and admires and practises many virtues ? It cannot be denied, I think, that the world is represented in the Scripture in these two different lights ; sometimes it is painted in the harshest colours, as wholly opposed to God ; and then the language used towards it is that of the severest condemnation ; it is then the prophetic Babylon. But at other times the picture is somewhat softened ; the world by wisdom knew not God, yet the times of this ignorance God

winked at ; the Gentiles had not the law, yet they showed the work of the law written on their hearts, in that they sometimes did by nature the things contained in the law. Thus represented, it is not the guilty world which Christ will come to judge ; but the lost and darkened world, which He came to save, and which His Church must regard with kindness, because she was once a stranger in its land : God's redemption only has brought Christians out of that state of natural light in which they were once living. And this milder view of the world appears in some respects to correspond with the prophetic idea of Egypt.

Historically, the most remarkable prophecies respecting Egypt speak of its judgment as not perpetual ; and in this they differ wholly from those which relate to Babylon and Edom. They are to be found in Ezekiel xxix. to xxxii., and they declare, that inasmuch as Egypt had been a faithless support to Israel, it should be overthrown and laid desolate ; but that after forty years it should be restored again,¹ though not to its former greatness. Now the historical fulfilment of this is sufficiently manifest. Egypt has had her periods of conquest and degradation, first under the Babylonians, and then under the Persians ; but she revived after each of these visitations, first, in the reign of Amasis after the Babylonian conquest ; and, secondly, during the dominion of the Ptolemies, when she was again independent, powerful, and flourishing, yet never rose to that pitch of greatness to which she had attained under the empire of the Pharaohs.

The higher sense of these prophecies must depend on the higher or spiritual meaning of the term Egypt. Jerome inter-

¹ This is a striking instance of the hyperbolical language of the prophecies as far as regards the historical sense of them. The prophecy says, 'I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate, from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia. No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years.' It is perfectly evident that we are to seek for no literal fulfilment of this : but I think also that the expression 'forty years' is no more to be taken literally than the other expressions ; and indeed it is inconsistent to seek chronological exactness where there is evidently no historical exactness intended.

prets it as signifying simply an evil power, the power of Satan ; and its inhabitants are those who have been subjected to the evil power, but are taken away from it and dispersed and winnowed, and then brought back and planted, as it were, in the Church ; but are now stripped of their pride, and humbled and obedient. But the Prophet expresses that they shall be planted again in their own land, the land of their birth or origin ; and it is hard to understand how this can mean the Church. Nor does Jerome's interpretation rest on any other foundation, so far as appears, than the supposed etymological meaning of the word *Pathros*, which he explains as signifying, '*Panis conculcatus*,'¹ '*ubi panis ille qui dixerit, Ego sum panis qui de cælo descendi, pravitate hæreticâ conculcatus est.*' If Egypt may be taken as the world in that milder sense which I have noticed above, the peculiarity of the prophecy may be supposed to consist in the declaration, that God's judgments denounced upon it are corrective, and not simply penal. (Ezekiel xxix. 13—15. Compare Jeremiah xlv. 26.) The world is judged, and its greatness brought low, not for its utter destruction, but that it may 'remember itself, and be turned unto the Lord.' Psalm xxii.

¹ Jerome merely says, '*Phatures, quæ interpretatur panis conculcatus.*' Did he connect the word with פָּתִי pedibus calcare, and פָּתִי panis albus? The first of these Gesenius connects with several words in the Indo-Germanic languages, observing, '*Pedibus calcare plurimis in linguis syllabâ Pat exprimitur varie inflexâ, v. Sanscr. pati via, Zend. pethô, pâte semita, Gr. πάτος, πατέω, Germ. inf. padden, pedden, πατεῖν; Pfad. Fuss. Angl. path, foot, ab Hebræis t in sibilum verso pas, bas.*' This etymology, and the allusion to hæretica pravitas, afford a specimen of the characteristic faults not of Jerome only, but of many others of the Christian writers of the first five centuries ; faults so obvious, that there would be no use in ever noticing them, were it not for the unwise admiration which makes these writers idols, and calls upon the church to fall down and worship them. The Hebrew פָּתִי is merely an Egyptian name for Upper Egypt, *Pathoures*, in Egyptian, signifying the Land of the South. See Gesenius on Isaiah xi. 11, who has taken his interpretation of the Egyptian word from Jablonsky. It is added in a note on the article *Pathros* in Jablonsky's work, '*Collectio et Explicatio Vocum Ægyptiacarum,*' &c. Lugdun. Bat. 1804—1813, that Upper Egypt is called the Land of the South by the Arabian Geographers, by Abulfeda, and Abulpharagius.

27. Compare also Isaiah xxvi. 9. 'When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.'

Finally, I may observe, that those passages in the prophecies which speak of the conversion of Egypt and of Assyria, and of their union with Israel, appear to me decisive proofs that it is not the literal Babylon, or Edom, or Egypt, which is the real subject of the denunciations of Prophecy in their full extent. For as on the one hand we have, in the case of Babylon and Edom, denunciations of utter and hopeless destruction, so on the other hand we find also in some instances a language of mercy which, if addressed to the same object as the threatenings of extreme vengeance, would seem to involve a contradiction. Thus, in the eighty-seventh Psalm, the fourth verse is interpreted almost by common consent as signifying, 'I will make mention of Egypt and Babylon, as being amongst those who know me : ' that is, as being no more strangers and enemies, but as being fellow-citizens with God's people, and of the household of God. And no less remarkable are the concluding verses of the nineteenth chapter of Isaiah, 'In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land ; whom the Lord of Hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.' It seems to me that this language absolutely forbids us to apply the extreme threatenings of Prophecy to the literal Babylon or to the literal Egypt. In both Christ's Church was planted, and both therefore, as the prophet expresses it, received the blessing of the Lord of Hosts. 'Tunc et opus manuum Domini erit in Assyriis,' says Jerome, 'hæ enim vel maxime gentes monachorum florent examinibus, Ægyptus et Mesopotamia, et pari inter se pietate contendunt.' From that hour the threatenings against Babylon and Egypt lost their historical sense altogether ; the literal Egypt was become Israel, the literal Babylon was become Israel ; the Egypt and Babylon of prophecy were from henceforth exclusively what they had always been predominantly,—the world which knew not God, and the world which was His enemy.

† NOTE 6, PAGE 344.

‘Passages which, according to the undoubted evidence of their context, were historically and literally spoken of some imperfect prophet, or king, or priest,’ &c.

The notion of a double sense in Prophecy has been treated by some persons with contempt. Yet it may be said, that it is almost involved necessarily in the very idea of Prophecy.

Every prophecy has, according to the very definition of the word, a double source ; it has, if I may venture so to speak, two authors, the one human, the other divine. For as on the one hand the word implies that it is uttered by the tongue of man, so it implies, on the other hand, that its author and origin is God. Again, if uttered by the tongue of man, it must also, unless we suppose him to be a mere instrument, in the same sense in which a flute or a harp utters sounds without understanding or consciousness, be coloured by his own mind. The prophet expresses in words certain truths conveyed to his mind ; but his mind does not fully embrace them, nor can it ; for how can man fully comprehend the mind of God ? Every man lives in time and belongs to time ; the present must be to him clearer than the future ; and if the future were fully laid open before him, so that he could understand it as he understands the actual world around him, he would cease to partake of the conditions of man’s nature. But with God there is no past nor future ; every truth is present to Him in all its extent, so that His expression of it, if I may so speak, differs essentially from that which can be comprehended by the mind or uttered by the tongue of man. Thus every prophecy as uttered by man, that is, by an intelligent and not a mere mechanical instrument, and at the same time as inspired by God, must have, as far as appears, a double sense ;—one, the sense entertained by the human mind of the writer, and the other, the sense infused into it by God ; nor can we venture to say in any case that the prophet understood or meant to convey all the mind of God, or that God designed to declare nothing more than was apprehended by the mind of the prophet.

But although a double sense of prophecy appears thus to be a necessary condition of the very idea of prophecy, yet it is a great question to what degree the prophet was blind to the divine meaning of the prophecies which he uttered, and how far his human meaning coincided with that divine meaning or fell short of it. And here the conceivable difference is exceedingly great; for we may suppose the prophet, on the one hand, to be totally ignorant of the divine meaning of his words, and to intend to express a meaning of his own quite unlike God's meaning; or, on the other hand, we may suppose him to be so aware of their divine meaning, as actually to give an appearance of incongruity to his language, so that his words under this conviction shall at times rise out of all proportion to their ordinary tenor, as expressing the meaning commonly, and as it were naturally, present to his own mind.

Of these two extremes, the first is exemplified in the well-known words of Caiaphas. 'It is expedient,' he said, 'that one man should die for the nation.' 'But this,' says John, 'he spake not of himself; but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation.' That is, the words which he spoke in one sense, God, speaking by him as the High Priest of Israel, uttered as it were in another sense. Here we see the two meanings of the human and of the divine author of a prophecy, and they differ from one another not in degree only, but in kind.

But we should not be warranted, I suppose, in extending this case to any of God's willing prophets, who gave themselves up obediently and gladly to utter His word. We may believe that their minds did not embrace the full extent of the truths which they declared, but we cannot think that they were wholly blind, much less that they were actually adverse to them.

Here however we have a declaration from one of our Lord's Apostles, which authorizes what we might of ourselves have conjectured. 'Of the salvation of your souls,' says St. Peter, 'the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in

them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.' 1 Peter i. 10-12. This passage is so full and so important, that we may fitly take it as our guide in our farther inquiries into the accordance of the human sense of the prophecies with that designed by God.

It will be observed, that St. Peter represents the Prophets as having knowledge on one point, and searching for it on another. They knew, that not to themselves but to future ages they were ministering the things which they were speaking; they were searching diligently what and what manner of time that should be when the fulfilment of their prophecies should be perfected. They searched what the time should be, *εἰς τίνα καιρὸν ἐδήλου τὸ ἐν αὐτοῖς Πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ*, that is, I suppose, when it should happen, at what period, whether men would have to wait for it many years or few. But they searched also what manner of time it should be, *εἰς ποῖον καιρὸν ἐδήλου τὸ Πνεῦμα*, that is, in what state men would then be; whether in such an one as that under which they themselves were living, or in one more or less different. When it is said that they searched for these things, it is implied of course that they did not know them at first; but whether by searching they were in any case enabled to discover them, this the words of St. Peter do not indeed affirm, but yet neither do they deny it.

Following then the guiding points here given to us, we should suppose that the Prophets' language would speak of blessings greater than they could reasonably anticipate in their own generation; but that at the same time having no distinct knowledge when these good things would come, or in what state mankind would be when they did come, they should blend the distant prospect not unfrequently with the nearer, and invest it with the same forms with which their experience was already familiar, not knowing how to paint it more exactly. Thus the greatest anticipated glory of the days of the Messiah

is made to form part of the picture of the restoration from Babylon : and thus also transferring to the unknown future the features of the well-known present, they represent the triumph of the future Israel over its enemies according to the pattern of the triumphs of the existing Israel ; and when the knowledge of God is spread over the earth, still it is described as connected with the actual Jewish forms, with a temple at Jerusalem, with priests and Levites, and a daily sacrifice. And yet they foresaw that there would be a change even in these points ; for they speak of a new covenant to be made hereafter between God and Israel, which should cause the old covenant of Mount Sinai to be forgotten.

But further, when the image of the Messiah had once been presented to their minds, and they looked forward to Him as to the perfect fulfilment of hope, and therefore of prophecy, they seem to have felt themselves at times transformed into His image ; so that the language, whether of hope or of devotion, which they uttered in their own persons, beginning in a tone suited to their own condition,—as God's servant indeed, but yet as compassed about with sin and infirmity,—swelled gradually into a fuller and higher strain, such as became God's perfect servant and Him only. It is thus that St. Peter, in his speech to the people of Israel on the day of Pentecost, justifies, if I may so speak, the strong expressions of triumphant confidence which form the conclusion of the sixteenth Psalm. 'David, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne ; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.'

And now we see why the language of the prophets, as applied to those nearer events which occupy, so to speak, the foreground in their vision, is and must be hyperbolical. Beginning with those near events, beginning amidst all familiar objects and images,—Israel, Jerusalem, the Law, the Temple, Babylon, Egypt, Edom, or Tyre, defeat and victory, captivity and deliverance, famine and plenty, desolation and prosperity,—other and higher hopes possess their minds almost immediately, distinct

in their greatness, undiscerned in their particular forms. Thus into the human framework there is infused a divine spirit, far too vast for that which contains it. The names are the same, but the meaning is different; and thus there arises a necessary inequality between the prophecy and its historical fulfilment, which if we do not understand how it has arisen, must be a source of extreme perplexity. And some, finding that the historical fulfilment has as yet borne no proportion to the greatness of the prophecy, look for another fulfilment with the same forms as the former, which shall accomplish what is yet wanting. Thus, because the restoration of the Jews from Babylon no way answered to the greatness of the prophetic picture which announced it, there are some who look for another historical restoration, which shall place the Jewish nation in Canaan under all those forms of happiness described by the Prophets; that is, in the enjoyment of plenty, of peace, and of dominion. But the greatness of the prophecy never really belonged to the historical forms with which it was connected, and can find its answer only in that which indeed was the original subject which called it forth,—the triumph of perfect good, or, in other words, the glory of Christ and of His kingdom.

Thus the inspired Prophets may be supposed to have been themselves conscious that their prophecies had a two-fold character; the form of them belonging to their own times, the spirit of them to times that were to come. When St. Peter says, that ‘it was revealed to them that not unto themselves but unto us they did minister the things now reported unto us,’ he does not surely mean to deny that they ministered to their own generation also, although not exclusively nor in the highest degree. The Prophets never cast themselves as it were into the midst of the ocean of futurity; their view reaches over the ocean, their hearts it may be are set on the shore beyond it, but their feet are on their own land, their eyes look upon the objects of their own land; there is the first occasion of their hopes, and there lie their duties. They are Prophets in both senses of that term,—preachers of righteousness to their own generation, as well as foretellers of blessing for generations to come. Their words therefore have an historical sense, clear and distinct in

all its forms, but imbued with a spirit so mighty that the earthly frame is too weak to bear it. And they have a spiritual sense also, worthily answering to the magnificence of their language, but in its details of time, place, and circumstance, indistinct to them, nay,—as we still see through a glass darkly,—indistinct, when it rises highest, even to us.

Generally speaking, therefore, we shall find all Prophecy to have a double sense according to these principles ; the one historical, and distinctly comprehended by the Prophet and his own generation in all its particular features, but never fulfilled answerably to the magnificence of its language, because that language was, properly speaking, inspired by a higher object ; the other spiritual, the proper forms of which neither the Prophet nor his contemporaries knew, and therefore he invested it with those which he did know : but fulfilled adequately, or even more than adequately, in Christ and His promises to His people, and His judgments upon His enemies.

And thus the study of Prophecy divides itself naturally, as Jerome saw and practically followed the division in his commentary, into two branches ; nor should either of these be neglected. First of all, looking upon the Prophet as a preacher of righteousness to his own generation, as belonging to a particular time and nation, and as speaking in the first instance to his own people, we should study him as we would any other ancient writer ; endeavouring to obtain a clear view of the state of things around him,—to understand the political relations of the several countries of which he speaks, to discover the principal vicissitudes of their history ; to enter into the way of thinking peculiar to his time, to know what evils physical and moral were most prevalent, and by what means and with what success they were combated. But if we stop here, it is not possible but that we should regard the Prophets as visionaries, who indulged in dreams of happiness and glory which never have been realised. To stop here, however, is to leave half our work undone. There remains the second branch of the study of Prophecy, no less real and sober than the first, no less instructive, but far more consolatory. Approaching the prophecies now from a different side, looking at them not from the

time and country of their human writer, but from our own,—from that period which the Scripture speaks of as the age to come,—from the period of Christ's kingdom,—we learn to substitute the realities of the spiritual world in the place of their historical symbols or images ; sacrifice, priesthood, temple, the holy city, the Israel of God, Israel's enemies, Israel's prophets, kings, and deliverers, shake off as it were the earthly garments which had concealed their true nature, and stand forth before us as they are. Then the language of Prophecy appears no longer hyperbolical ; no tongue of man has described, nor heart of man conceived, such a holiness, or such a glory, but that a greater than either is here. Then looking at the pictures of human suffering, so true an image of our actual condition, and of human exaltation, so lively an echo to our instinctive hopes, and finding that both were combined and both more than realised in the death and resurrection of Christ our Lord,—we understand how the prophecies have in their highest sense been fulfilled already ; and we perceive through the declaration of Christ's Gospel how we ourselves may hope to have our portion also in this fulfilment ; for it is Christ's will that those whom God has given Him should be with Him where He is, and should behold and share His glory.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I.

IN order to illustrate the view of the interpretation of Scripture prophecies offered in the foregoing Sermons, I have taken some of the most remarkable of those which are quoted in the New Testament as referring to our Lord, or to His kingdom; and have endeavoured to see how their application can be explained on the principles above laid down; so that the reader will thus be enabled to judge for himself of the soundness of the system which I have followed.

For this purpose I have selected those prophecies, or those parts of the Old Testament, which have been applied to the times of the Messiah by our Lord Himself.

These are,

Malachi iii. 1.	}	Applied to John the Baptist.	St. Matt. xi. 10-14.
Malachi iv. 5.			
Isaiah vi. 9, 10.	}	Applied to the Jews of our Lord's own time.	St. Matt. xiii. 14.
Isaiah xxix. 13.			St. Matt. xv. 7.
Psalms xxxv. 19.			St. John xv. 25.
Psalms viii. 2.			St. Matt. xxi. 16.
Psalms xli. 9.	}	Applied to Judas Iscariot.	St. John xiii. 18.
Psalms cxviii. 22, 23.			St. Matt. xxi. 42.
Psalms cx. 1.	}	Applied to our Lord himself.	St. Matt. xxii. 43.
Psalms xxii. 1.			St. Matt. xxvii. 46.
Zechariah xiii. 7.			St. Matt. xxvi. 31.
Isaiah lxi. 1.			St. Luke iv. 21.

Of these passages, three, in all probability, Isaiah vi. 9, 10, xxix. 13, and Psalm viii. 2, may be regarded as merely describing similar feelings to those which our Lord saw in the men of His own generation. Isaiah was told to say to the Jews of his time, 'Hear ye indeed, but understand not,' &c., and this might be

addressed with equal truth to the Jews in the time of our Lord. These passages, then, do not seem to be referred to as being strictly speaking prophetic.

Psalm xxxv. 19 requires, however to be noticed more particularly. The Psalmist says, 'Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me, neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause.' Our Lord's words are, 'If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin ; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.' That is to say, 'I have dealt with this people as the prophets my forerunners, and in a certain degree my representatives, dealt with them formerly. As they offered good and received in return evil, so that the hatred shown to them was without a cause, thus, but much more perfectly, was it to be with me. I was to fulfil that example which the prophets set in old times, and therefore I spake as never man spake, and did works such as no other man did, that I too might be hated without a cause as they were.' With equal propriety our Lord might, I conceive, have referred, if He had so chosen, to the hundred and twentieth Psalm, where there is a similar sentiment, 'I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war ;' or to any other passages in which the prophets expressed a similar language. And our Lord's meaning in saying, 'This cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law,' is merely this, that as He was to fulfil all righteousness, so in whatever respects the prophets had duly performed their work, in these they were but types of Him, and He also was to do as they had done.

A somewhat similar explanation may be given of the reference to Psalm xli. 9. 'I know whom I have chosen,' said our Lord, 'but I did it that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.' That is, 'in choosing such a man as Judas to be my disciple, it is not that I did not know what he was and would be ; but that in this respect also, I might be as the prophets were who went before me ; that with me as with them, my foes should be they

of mine own household.' One of the bitterest of innocent sufferings is to be betrayed by those to whom we have shown kindness and confidence; and as this was the portion of God's imperfect servants the prophets, so also Christ was pleased that it should be His portion also. And as our Lord referred to the forty-first Psalm, so might He equally, I believe, have referred to the fifty-fifth Psalm, ver. 12, 13, 14, where the Psalmist again speaks of the peculiar misery of being persecuted and injured by those whom he had regarded as his friends.

But having noticed one passage of the Psalms which has been applied to Judas in the New Testament, I may perhaps here anticipate the mention of two others, which are applied also to him by St. Peter, Acts i. 20. These are Psalm lxxix. 25, and cix. 8. They are both taken from Psalms which contain the strongest denunciations of evil against the enemies or persecutors of the Psalmist; denunciations so strong, that many persons, as is well known, shrink from repeating them, when they occur in the Service of the Church. And if we regard merely the mind of the human writer of these Psalms, it is probable that his feelings did partake of those of the men of old time, who said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy.' But that vehemence of denunciation, or of imprecation as we may truly call it, which God's servants in a more perfect dispensation could not have repeated in their own persons without sin, expresses in no hyperbolical language what is the extremity of judgment reserved for the enemies of God. For the human enemies of the imperfect servants of God there were probably circumstances of extenuation, which made the curses, as applied to them historically, only applicable partially and with abatements. But for those who are the enemies of God's perfect servant, and whom His unerring judgment shall declare to have been so, the fearful language of these Psalms is not exaggerated; and Judas had been so marked out by Christ's own sentence as being a son of perdition, that St. Peter considered the curses of Scripture to belong to him, no less than its blessings belonged to those who through Christ were become the sons of God.

The passages from Malachi, which our Lord applies to John

the Baptist, offer I think a remarkable contrast to most of the other prophecies referred to in the New Testament. Generally speaking, the prophecies are applied in their highest sense, distinct from the first and lower meaning, which may be supposed to have been more immediately present to the mind of their human author. But the passages in Malachi appear to have been fulfilled in John the Baptist in their first and immediate sense : and therefore, according to the general analogy of Scripture, there would be a higher sense in which John was not their fulfilment, but in which they will be fulfilled hereafter. For to Malachi, writing after Israel had been restored from Babylon, and closing as he did the volume of ancient prophecy, the immediate object of hope was the coming of our Lord in the flesh ; there was no temporal deliverance intervening, as with those who prophesied during the Captivity, which might in the first instance awaken hope, although it was unable to satisfy it. The day of the Lord was, first of all, Christ's coming in the flesh, and the messenger who in this sense prepared the way before Him, was John the Baptist. But as there is yet to come a day of the Lord in a yet higher sense, a great day and a dreadful, when Christ shall come again and shall finally establish His kingdom, so it is to be expected that Elijah the prophet will again prepare His way before Him ; that preachers of repentance, whether one or more, in the spirit and power of Elijah shall arouse men to a livelier sense of the depth and breadth of the Christian law, lest Christ come and smite the earth with a curse.

Five passages in the Prophets are applied by our Lord to Himself. One of these is Isaiah lxi. 1, in which the prophet declares himself to be anointed and commissioned to proclaim a period of deliverance and of blessing. Now allowing that here, as in other similar prophecies, the prophet did not know distinctly ' what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in him did signify,' so that he connected the period of highest blessings with that of the return of Israel from Babylon,—yet the language is so magnificent, so applicable in its full meaning to the one perfect Saviour and to Him only, that we can well understand how justly our Lord might say,

after reading these words in the synagogue at Nazareth, 'This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.'

A second passage is Psalm cx. 1. This our Lord quotes as being understood by the Jews generally to refer to the Messiah. It is the fashion, I believe, with the modern Jews to suppose it to be addressed by the Psalmist, whom they do not allow to have been David, either to David or to some other of their kings, whom he calls his Lord. If we consider the language of the forty-fifth and seventy-second Psalms, and of the promise made to David, 2 Sam. vii. 12, 16, it is not impossible that this Psalm also may have been applied to an earthly king, whether David or Solomon, and addressed to him as by his earthly subjects; whilst the King himself may have used it in another and truer sense, as referring to him who was his own Lord, no less than his people's. Nor is the language, if taken in the historical sense, more hyperbolic than that of Isaiah ix., which undoubtedly I suppose refers in its lower meaning to the reign of a merely human sovereign. But the question remains, what is the real and worthy subject of that language which, as applied to its human subject, is so exceedingly hyperbolic? And if we allow the fact, that hopes of a Messiah did exist as early as David's time, it is difficult not to believe that such very high and magnificent expressions must have had reference to him, however indistinctly, and however much other and nearer subjects may have in part suggested it.

A third passage, applied by our Lord to Himself, is Psalm cxviii. 22, 23. Neither the date, nor the author, nor the immediate subject of this Psalm, can be fixed beyond vague conjectures. It is the language at times of one of God's prophets, at other times of His whole people; but it expresses only the relations which they have in common, not those in which they differ from each other; and both the prophets and the people of Israel, so far as they are alike *ἄγιοι*, or God's chosen, are equally types of Christ; that is, they are the representatives, imperfectly, of the good cause in human nature which Christ represented perfectly. They therefore have the portion of redeemed human nature, evil struggling with good, but good triumphant. In this Psalm the Prophet is persecuted, (ver. 5

10-13,) is chastened, (ver. 18,) is rejected, (ver. 22,) but he is also supported, delivered, and exalted. What particular rejection and exaltation in the case of the human writer of the Psalm gave occasion to the twenty-second verse, it is impossible for us to discover: but we know that in the fullest sense the expression of both is applicable to Christ; and this union of humiliation and victory, which belongs essentially to all God's servants, was manifested most entirely in His Son; and every notice of it in the ancient prophets belongs therefore to Him even more than to them.

But most strikingly is this union exhibited in the twenty-second Psalm; a Psalm of which the human and historical origin is also unknown: but of which we may be perfectly sure that it follows the great law of Prophecy, inasmuch as its language must have been hyperbolical as applied to its immediate and human subject, but is barely just, and finds a perfect accomplishment, if applied to its divine and final subject. We cannot so much as conjecture to what circumstances in the life of the human author, ver. 16-18 were intended to allude; but we are quite certain that he never could have witnessed within his own experience the consummation of glory and happiness to which the Psalm points at its close. We may justly look upon this whole Psalm therefore as written ἐν Χριστῷ; that is to say, as adapted to His person far more than to that of the human writer,—although doubtless the human writer's own circumstances formed the groundwork of it; and it was the very mixture of suffering and of hope in his own proper person, which,—making him in a manner a type or image of Christ,—fitted him to express the likeness in words far more closely than he could do in his life and actions; so that he who lived, and suffered, and hoped, only in his own human and imperfect measure, was yet in his words, by the power of God's Spirit, enabled to be, if I may so speak, as Christ Himself.

The last of the passages applied by our Lord to Himself is Zechariah xiii. 7. So great is the obscurity which hangs over the latter chapters of Zechariah, in all points relating to them as human writings, that the immediate and historical sense can scarcely in any place be discerned with certainty. But who-

ever was in a lower sense the shepherd smitten, by whose fall the sheep were scattered and severely tried, but afterwards comforted and brought near to God,—yet all these circumstances so suit the great Shepherd of the sheep, and any others in whom they might have been partially fulfilled, were so evidently but imperfect types of Him in these relations, that He rightly applied them to Himself.

What I have thus attempted to do with the prophecies applied in a Christian sense by our Lord Himself, might be done also with those applied by His Apostles or Evangelists. But the reader, if he finds any satisfaction in the method here given, may easily adapt it for himself to each particular prophecy.

As, however, I have endeavoured to explain the principle on which the prophecies applied by our Lord to Himself are applicable, so I would wish to see whether the same principle will not also explain that great prophecy of which He was not the interpreter, but the author—the prophecy contained in the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel.

Now if any persons are inclined to condemn one particular point in the foregoing system of interpretation,—the supposition, namely, that every prophecy may be expected to have at least two senses, and that as scarcely any are purely historical, so scarcely any are purely spiritual,—I would request them to observe how entirely this supposition is confirmed by the prophecy now before us. It cannot be doubted that it proceeds from an immediate historical occasion; that it was addressed primarily to the hopes and fears of the men of the then living generation; that it speaks of the approaching siege and destruction of the historical Jerusalem. Nor yet can it be doubted that it does not rest long within the narrow limits of its historical subject; that the language rises almost immediately, and the vision magnifies; that the outward and historical framework bursts as it were and perishes, while the living spirit which it contained alone supplies its place; that Jerusalem and the Romans become the whole human race, and God's true

heavenly ministers of judgment; that the time fixed definitely for the fulfilment of the historical sense of the prophecy melts away and becomes an ineffable mystery, when it would in fact be no other than the date when Time should be swallowed up in Eternity: that the coming of the Son of man, imperfectly shadowed forth in the power which visited Jerusalem with destruction, is in its full verity the end of all Prophecy; which can only find its accomplishment when Prophecy shall cease, and knowledge and faith and hope, the guides and supports of our earthly life, shall all pass away together.

There is no doubt that the prophecy relates historically to the destruction of Jerusalem. The false Christs, the wars and rumours of wars, the famines, pestilences, and earthquakes, the persecution of Christ's servants, the great spread of the knowledge of His Gospel, have been all recognised as fulfilled up to a certain point in the actual history of the period between our Lord's resurrection and the year 70. So the grievous calamities of the Jewish war and of the siege of Jerusalem, the manifestation of Christ's power in the utter destruction of the people who were the bitterest enemies of His kingdom, and the accomplishment of all this within the lifetime of the men of that very generation,—may all be traced, as they have been often, historically. All these circumstances can be traced historically; yet it was long ago remarked, that the history of the first century does not produce their adequate fulfilment. 'There were not many men in the time of the Apostles,' says Origen,¹ 'who said that they were Christ; there was perhaps Dositheus of Samaria, the founder of the Dositheans, and Simon, of whom the Acts of the Apostles make mention, who called himself the great power of God: but besides these there have been none within my knowledge either before or since.' And again, 'Not yet have many in the Church itself become traitors; not yet have there arisen false prophets to deceive many: nor as yet have Christ's servants been hated by all nations, even to the very extremities of the earth, for His Name's sake: nor has the Gospel of the kingdom been yet preached in the whole world. For no one says that the Gospel has been preached amongst all the Ethio-

¹ Comment. in St. Matt.

pians, especially amongst those beyond the river: nor yet amongst the Seres; nor have they in the East heard the word of Christ's religion. What are we to say of the Britons, or of the Germans on the shores of the Ocean, or of the Barbarians, Dacians, Sarmatians, and Scythians, of whom very many have not yet heard the word of the Gospel, but will hear it at the very end of the world?' 'Many not of the Barbarian nations only, but even of those of our own world, have not to this day heard the word of Christ's religion.' Thus Origen wrote in the first part of the third century, and what was true between 200 and 250 A.D. must have been much more true between A.D. 33 and 70. Or what shall we say of the appearance of the sign of the Son of man in heaven, coming in the clouds with power and great glory, and gathering His chosen from one end of heaven to the other, before that generation which witnessed His death and resurrection had altogether passed away? It is clear then that we can so far trace in our Lord's own prophecy the same rule which we have supposed to exist in all the older prophecies; namely, that it arises out of, and in its first sense relates to, something historical; but that when taken in this sense, its language is not adequately, but only partially and typically fulfilled by the historical event.

We have, however, laid it down as a rule no less general, that there is in the prophecies, besides this first and historical sense, another sense not historical but spiritual; that is, not relating to particular places, persons, and times, but to pure good and evil in all times and everywhere; and that taken in this sense, the language does not go beyond the fulfilment, but almost, if it may be, falls short of it. And this rule also seems to be observed in this prophecy of our Lord. What now is Jerusalem and its temple in this sense, and what is meant by their destruction? Jerusalem simply, must be God's people; corrupt and rejected Jerusalem, must be God's apostate people; those who belonging nominally to His Church, are in heart His enemies. By these His true people are ever vexed, hindered, persecuted; they cannot enter into their perfect rest till the false Jerusalem shall be destroyed. Meanwhile, ere the destruction take place, all evils prevail in the world as heretofore; wars have not

ceased, nor is the curse taken off from nature ; nor is truth, though declared to all, followed by all. Iniquity abounds, and yet the knowledge of Christ is spread more and more widely over the world. Temptations of unbelief are multiplied, and temptations of superstition ; growing in their power to seduce, as the end draws nearer. Thus far the experience of eighteen hundred years has illustrated the spiritual sense of the prophecy. To attempt to follow it to the end were presumptuous, still more presumptuous to seek to know when that end shall be. But surely there will be a real and adequate fulfilment of the remainder of the prophecy, as there has been of its beginning. The false Jerusalem will perish, and then the true Jerusalem, the real and perfect kingdom of God, will succeed. It may be that this great truth may be again partially and typically fulfilled ; nay, that it may be so fulfilled many times over ; the fulfilment becoming continually more and more adequate to the prophecy, till the last and perfect fulfilment. There may be judgments more or less complete executed upon the false Jerusalem, and after each judgment the condition of God's true people may become more secure. But though heaven and earth will pass away, yet Christ's words will not pass away : and as surely as He rose from the dead, and is now at the right hand of God, so surely may we expect a full and perfect fulfilment of His promise, that He will put down all His enemies,—Babylon, Jerusalem, sin itself, and the last enemy death,—and that He will reign visibly amongst His true people in life eternal.

APPENDIX II.

ALTHOUGH not strictly belonging to the subject of Prophecy, yet as closely connected with it, and as presenting some considerable difficulties, I may notice here the application of passages in the Old Testament to our Lord, which we might judge to refer simply to God the Father, and of which we might not see why they should be selected, rather than any other parts of the Scriptures where mention is made of God, or of Jehovah.

Of such passages there is a remarkable collection in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Another instance occurs in St. John, xii. 41, and another in xix. 37; others in 1 Corinthians x. 4, 9; Ephesians iv. 8; Romans x. 13; xiv. 10, 11; and another, according to Lachmann's reading, in Jude 5. These will be, I think, sufficient to show the principle on which such applications are made.

The places in the Old Testament referred to in the above passages are severally as follows:—

Deuteronomy xxxii. 43 (Sept. Vers.), referred to in Hebrews i. 6.	
Psalms xlv. 6, 7	Hebrews i. 8, 9.
Psalms cii. 25–27	Hebrews i. 10–12.
Isaiah vi. 1–10	St. John xii. 41.
Zechariah xii. 10	St. John xix. 37.
Exodus xiii. 21, 22; Deut. xxxii. 4, 15, 18, 30, 31, and other passages in Exodus and Numbers	1 Cor. x. 4–9.
Psalms lxviii. 18	Ephesians iv. 8.
Joel ii. 32	Romans x. 13.
Isaiah xlv. 23	Romans xiv. 10, 11

And Jude 5 runs in Lachmann's edition thus, 'Jesus, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.'

Now I believe the principle on which all these applications are made is one and the same; namely, that wherever the Old Testament speaks of God as manifesting His glory, or showing Himself in any visible form to His people, or descending to visit His people, or to judge their enemies, it is to be understood as speaking of the Word or Son of God, who afterwards was manifested in the flesh in the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This principle rests on the notion, that God the Father is and ever has been invisible to man, 'dwelling in light inaccessible, whom no man hath seen or can see.' 'No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.' God thus reveals Himself to man only in His Son, He communicates with man only by His word.

Thus in Deuteronomy, xxxii. 43, the Lord is spoken of as about to judge His people, and to take vengeance on their enemies, attended by His holy angels. At His appearance the heavens rejoice with Him, and all the angels of God bow down before Him; then He executes His work of judgment, and thoroughly cleanses the land of His people. But all these expressions,—indicating One who is not veiled in light inaccessible, but who descends on earth, and is manifested to men and angels,—are therefore understood to be applicable only to God the Son.

So in Psalm xlv. 6, the Person there addressed as God is described as a King going forth to war, as conquering, as reigning visibly amongst His people. This can only be the Son of God, and therefore He is in the Psalm itself distinguished from God the Father: the Psalmist says to Him, 'God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.'

Again, in Psalm cii. the Lord there spoken of '*arises* to have mercy upon Zion,' (v. 13,) and comes down to earth; 'when the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall *appear in his glory*.' Here therefore is an *appearance*, ἐπιφανεῖα, of the glory of God; and therefore He who appears is God the Son.

Isaiah, vi. 1-10, contains a description of a vision in which

God manifested Himself to the prophet Isaiah. 'I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.' 'Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.' But no man hath seen God at any time; that is, God the Father. And therefore St. John, quite naturally, if I may so speak, observes of the words which he had just before quoted from the tenth verse of this chapter, 'These things said Isaiah, when he saw his (*i.e.* Christ's) glory, and spake of him.'

So again in Zechariah, xii. 10, God describes Himself as taking vengeance on the enemies of His people, and restoring Jerusalem; using the word, 'they shall *look* on me whom they have pierced.' Here again is a visible manifestation of the Godhead, and therefore St. John understands it of Him who was pierced visibly before his own eyes with the Roman soldier's spear.

When St. Paul says that the Israelites 'drank' in the wilderness 'of that spiritual Rock which followed them, and that Rock was Christ,' and when St. Jude speaks of 'Jesus who delivered his people out of Egypt,' the notion seems to be the same. He who delivered the people out of Egypt was the same who *appeared* to Moses in the burning bush, and whose glory in a visible form was manifested on the tabernacle. And therefore He who led and supported His people in the wilderness was Christ.

In Psalm lxviii. 18, He who ascended on high, is the God who dwelleth in Zion, and who 'went before his people' in the wilderness: 'whose chariots are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels;' (ver. 7, 16, 17.) And the very word 'ascended' can be only applicable to God on the supposition of His being on earth. But God visiting mankind on earth is Christ.

Joel, ii. 27, speaks of God being 'in the midst of Israel;' and of 'the great and terrible day of the Lord.' (ver. 31.) The great day of God is the great day of God's *appearing*, to judge the wicked, and to raise up the good. What St. Paul calls our blessed hope, 'the glorious appearing of the great God,' (Titus ii. 13,) St. Peter calls 'the day of God.' (2 Peter iii. 12.) And therefore when Joel, after speaking of the coming of

‘the great and terrible day of the Lord,’ goes on immediately to say, (ver. 32,) that ‘whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered,’ it is evident that he means that Lord whose ‘great day’ or whose ‘appearing’ should then have taken place. But God appearing to judge mankind is Christ.

Finally, Isaiah, xlv. 23, must be connected with the beginning of the prophecy in chap. xl., where God, who avenges His people upon Babylon, is expressly said to ‘visit the cities of Judah,’ and they are called upon to ‘*behold* their God.’ (xl. 9.) And in chap. xlv. also, in the verse immediately preceding that to which St. Paul refers, God says, ‘*Look unto me*, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.’ (ver. 22.) And in ver. 24 it is added, ‘To him shall men come.’ Here then we have again the notion of God coming down from heaven, and being present among His people, and therefore He to whom ‘every knee shall bow,’ (ver. 23,) is rightly understood by St. Paul to be Christ the Lord, at whose judgment-seat we shall all stand.

It has been my earnest endeavour in the foregoing pages to avoid as much as possible all such questions as might be likely to engender strife; that is to say, such as are connected with the peculiar opinions of any of the various parties existing in the Church. If these are not touched upon, men can differ without hostility, they can analyse a book fairly, can disapprove of some things in it, and yet approve of others; nay, can think its main conclusions erroneous, without condemning it as unsound and mischievous. I have tried so to write on the subject of Prophecy as not to shock even those from whom on many other points I differ widely. Once or twice I found myself on the very edge of debateable ground; but as my argument did not oblige me to enter on it, I was glad not to cross its boundaries. At the same time I need not, I trust, say, that what I have written is in no respect coloured for the purpose of conciliation: if any one agrees with the views and language of this volume, let him be assured, that so far the agreement between us is real; that I hold these views and use this language as sincerely and as earnestly as he could do himself;

and let him share with me the comfort of believing,—for surely a great comfort it should be to Christians,—that there are other points over and above the main articles of our common faith, on which we can truly have the same mind and speak the same thing.

THE END.

